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REVIEW

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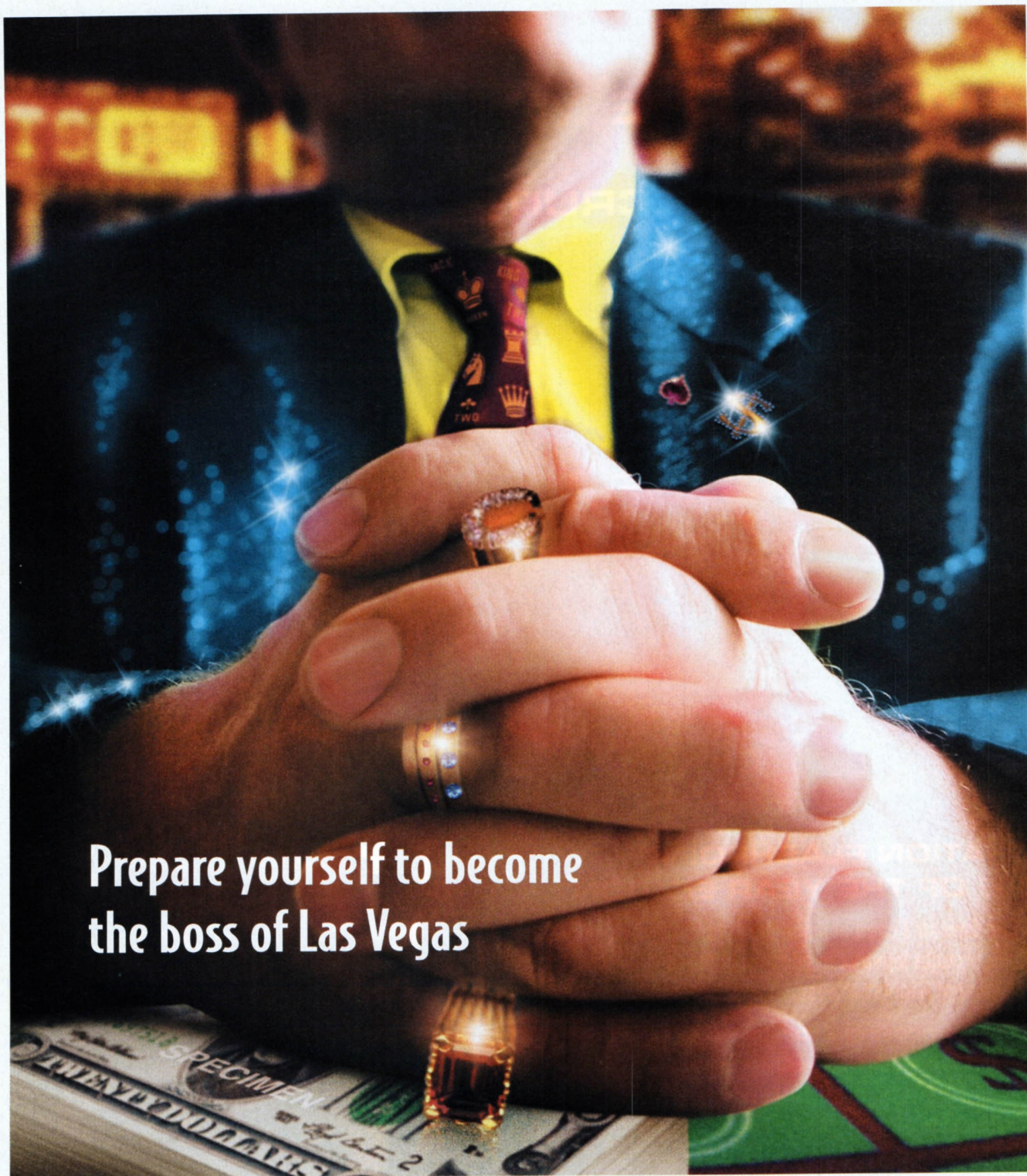


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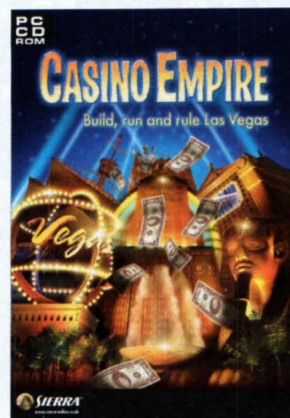
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Best Of Both Worlds



It's an ongoing debate, but some people think the single-player game is dead in the water. And with BT finally getting off its arse and attempting to drum up a bit of business for its broadband service, it seems that 2003 might be the year that the UK catches up with the rest of the developing world.

Having enjoyed the benefits of a 'phat pipe' for the past year I can say it's well worth the asking price, but I can honestly say, hand on heart, that most of the games I've played recently have been strictly single-player. *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Mafia* have completely reinvigorated my enthusiasm for gaming, and this month I got the surprise of my life when the sequel to a shooter I didn't have much time for turned out to be one of the best games of the year. *No One Lives Forever 2* proves that as the years go by the single-player game is going from strength to strength. Dead in the water? Check out the review, play the two exclusive demos on our cover discs and then come back for a chat.

But the PC has always had the best of both worlds and we've got proof this issue. If you're looking for a good excuse to upgrade from your 56K modem, turn to page 72 and check out the definitive review of the 2003 remix of *Unreal Tournament*. As one of the first of the new breed of shooters, *UT2003* looks absolutely stunning and doesn't play too bad either. It might even be good enough to prise me away from the attentions of Cate Archer... Then again...

Dave Woods
Editor



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NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

P66 Cate Archer is back in one the best shooters of all time

COVER DISCS P134



■ 8 EXCLUSIVE DEMOS

No One Lives Forever 2 single-player demo, No One Lives Forever 2 teaser, WWE: RAW, Crazy Taxi, Beach Life, Arx Fatalis, American Conquest and New World Order

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Also exclusive to our DVD are essential programs, essential drivers for the latest sound and graphics cards and essential patches including archived patches for the biggest PC titles

■ Contents differ between the CDs and the DVD. Check the disc pages for more details

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DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD
30 CLEVELAND STREET
LONDON W1T 4JD

CANNON FODDER

Editor Dave Woods 020 7907 6375
Associate Editors Anthony Holden 020 7907 6377
Jamie Seltin 020 7907 6378
Group Production Editor Ruth Lindsay 020 7907 6371
Senior Art Editor Phil Clark 020 7907 6380
Reviews Editor Martin Korda 020 7907 6379
Section Editor Rhianna Pratchett 020 7907 6376
Designers Tim MacDonald, Nick Towers, John Walford
Sub Editor Rosanna Negrotti
Contributors Chris Anderson, Stuart Campbell, Simon Clay,
Daniel Emery, Mark Eveleigh, Steve Hill, Tony Lamb, Adam
Phillips, Paul Presley, Keith Pullin, Henry Obasi, Steve
O'Hagan, Steven Poole, Steve Randall, Richie Shoemaker,
Steve Spence, Phil Wand

TEL: 020 7907 6000
FAX: 020 7907 6020
EMAIL: letters@pczone.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.pczone.co.uk

Publisher EPU Sarah Giller 020 7907 6332
Disc Producers Alan Stonebridge 020 7907 6336
Cecil Ashley 020 7907 6333 Lee Cocker 020 7907 6334
CD Editor Mark Eveleigh 020 7907 6335
Senior Online Editor Gareth Ramsay 020 7907 6815
Online Editor Stuart Bishop 020 7907 6817
Hardware Photography Simon Clay
Origination ColourFlow 020 7323 0022
Printed in England by ET Heron
Distribution Seymour Distribution

GENERALS

Group Publisher Duncan Tickell 020 7907 6352
Publisher Tara Leathers 020 7907 6508
Group Sales Director Ian Westwood

Advertising Director John Garewal 020 7907 6008
Leisure Group Ad Manager Mandy Hewitt 020 7907 6670
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Sales Executive Jonathan Boakes 020 7907 6673
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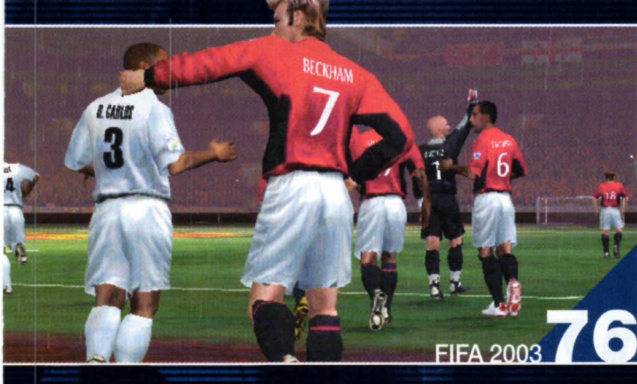
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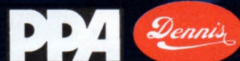
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Some like it hot...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Rockstar Games

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Early 2003

WEBSITE www.rockstargames.com/vicecity

IN SUMMARY

After stealing cars, killing police and blowing up rival gangs in *GTA III* you've been festering in maximum security for a few years. Stupidly, the authorities believe you've been rehabilitated and let you back into Liberty City. Fearing reprisals, your boss Sonny Forelli sends you to Vice City, but it turns out to be a set-up. Penniless and on your own it's time to start taking on new missions and generally tearing the place a new arsehole...

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

GTA III is one of our favourite games of all time, not to mention killing off the argument about linear vs freeform games in a single stroke. It was both, with brilliant gameplay, anarchic humour and a vast city that appeared to live its own life. You can expect more of the same from *Vice City*, along with new vehicles, a larger playing area and some seriously whacked-out shirts.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

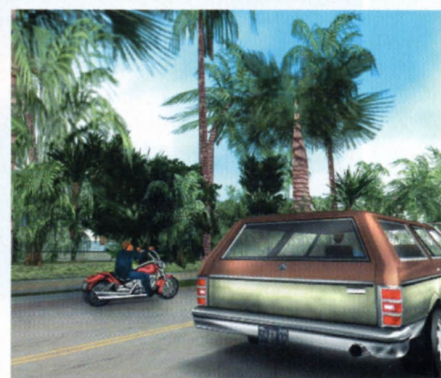
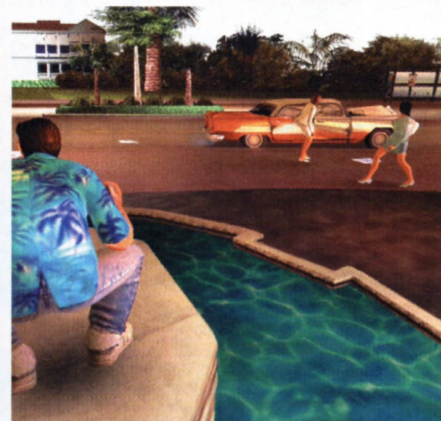
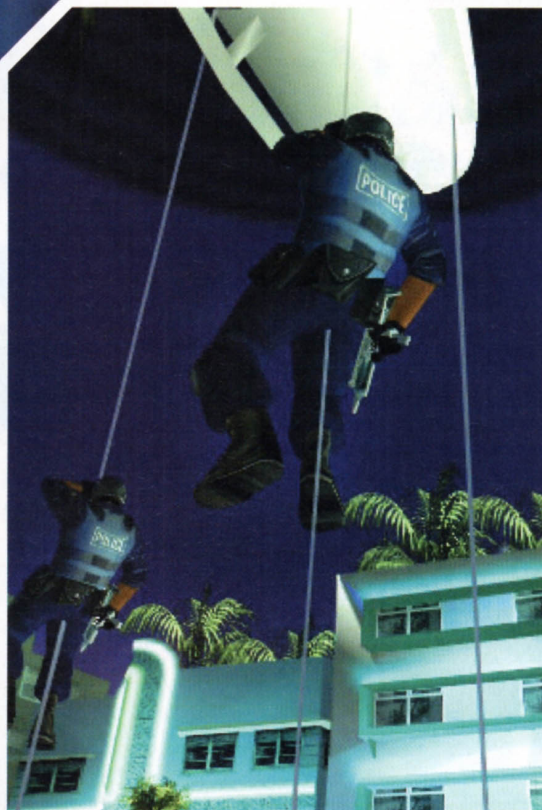
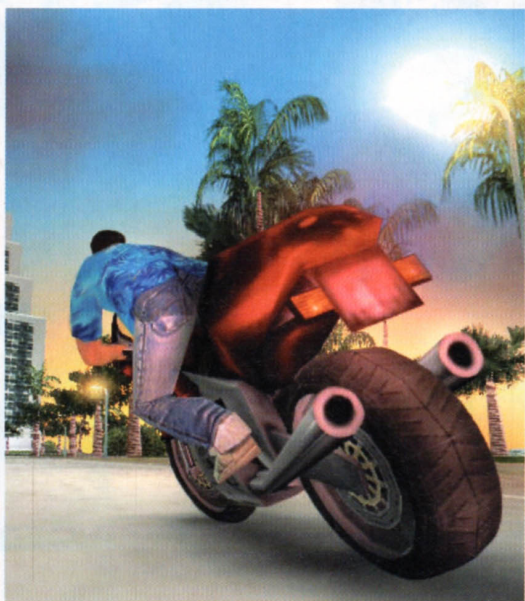
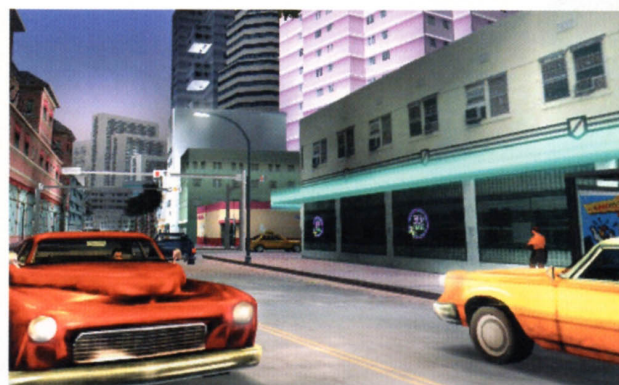
Welcome back to the moment in time that fashion forgot

■ **BLOKE WITH THE BACK-PERM** Dave Woods





It's hard to believe, but *Vice City* looks a hell of a lot better than its predecessor. Resist the urge to play it on PS2, wait for the PC version to hit, it'll be da bomb.



IT'S EASY TO look back and laugh, but the '80s were truly screwed. I remember watching the transformation of gay-bashing lager-swilling thugs into style icons with pink cardigans, no socks and, most disturbing of all, back-perms. They still fought and they still drank, they just looked like freaks, and if the blame can be pointed anywhere it's got to be at the door of *Miami Vice*, an MTV-style cop show hybrid that made Jan Hammer a household name.

Undeniably cool, it was also slick and heavily stylised. One of the show's rules was 'no bricks, no reds and no browns', an edict ignored by game designers ever since. But with sunshine, drugs and alligators called Elvis in the mix, it seems like the perfect show to build a game around, and who better to do so than Rockstar Games? For the past six months they've been doing their research into the misguided glitz and glamour of the era (even going so far as to contact fan site miamivice.com for fashion tips), for a top-secret project now officially unveiled as *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*.

Picking up where *GTA III* left off, you've just been released from maximum security, back onto the streets of Liberty City. Your boss, Sonny Forelli, thinks it's best if you take a vacation and ships you down to Vice City, which Rockstar promises is going to be two and a half times bigger than Liberty City with three times as many pedestrians, inhabitable interiors such as shopping malls and nightclubs, and more than 100 vehicles (compared to the 40 you could jack in *GTA III*), with the introduction of motorbikes and roller-blading chicks.

It might sound like a party but unfortunately it turns out to be a set-up, leaving you homeless and penniless, and you'll have to take on three times as many missions as you had to complete to get to the top of

"Luckily in-car entertainment is a big part of the game again with around 10 hours of radio chat and music"

Liberty City. Luckily in-car entertainment is a big part of the game again, with around 10 hours of radio chat and music. You can expect to hear up to 90 licensed tracks from the '80s, along with new spiel from the DJ chat kings, which is as good a reason to buy *Vice City* as the game itself. If you didn't play the last game (there are a few of you out there, apparently) you'll have to take our word for it that the radio talk shows are genuinely hilarious and actually prompted us to drive into a quiet lay-by just to have a listen. When was the last time a game made you laugh for the right reasons?

Of course the real question is when is the damn thing going to be released? Due to ship on PS2 in November, we're convinced we're not going to have to put up with the same sort of wait

we had to endure for *GTA III*, but don't expect to see it on the shelves this side of Christmas. **PC**





Heading for the Holy Land

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Black Cactus

PUBLISHER Wanadoo

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE March 2003

WEBSITE www.blackcactus.com

IN SUMMARY

Starting off as a Middle Eastern Baron in the ninth century, you must use your military, diplomatic and economic powers to become King of Jerusalem. Using an enhanced version of the *Warrior Kings* engine, *Crusaders* will bear many similarities to its predecessor, although it'll place far more of an emphasis on city building, while battles will be smaller and even more reliant on using the fully 3D terrain to your tactical advantage than before.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

From the same team that brought us the superb *Warrior Kings*, *Crusaders* not only looks better, but has some superb features sadly lacking from many other RTS games, such as proper siege warfare and fully tactical landscapes. It'll also be one of the best-looking RTS games ever, with units boasting double the polygon count of those from *Warrior Kings*. The show-offs.

CRUSADERS - BATTLE FOR OUTREMER

Fight for your right to be king

■ **LEADING THE CHARGE** Martin Korda





Zooming into the action reveals some stunningly detailed visuals and superb attention to detail.



CRUSADERS – *Battle For Outremer* – pronounced ‘Ooo-tra-mare’ if you’re French, ‘Ooo-tree-more’ if you’re American or ‘Out-tree-mer’ if you’re an ignorant twat – is an RTS set in the Holy Land during the ninth, tenth and 11th centuries which will focus as much on city building and historical accuracy as it will on combat. Sounds less interesting than a three-hour conversation about crochet with a senile, incontinent aunt right? Well think again, because *Crusaders* is shaping up to be one of the most promising RTS games of 2003.

Black Cactus, creator of the stunning *Warrior Kings* and currently working on the follow-up, *Warrior Kings – Battles*, is also the cerebral power behind this Middle Eastern epic. While the visuals may bear a multitude of striking resemblances to those two titles (go on, have a closer look at the screenshots, I’ll wait... they’re all in-game you know... honest... OK that’s long enough), the engine itself is actually a hugely enhanced version of the *Warrior Kings* one, spewing out twice as many polygons as its predecessor. Oh yes, and its similarly overly familiar-looking interface is

being streamlined to make it far more accessible to newcomers. Nice pictures, better interface, good start. So what else has it got to offer?

Gameplay. Obviously. But not your average mass-and-charge mess of dated RTS ideas grafted onto an archaic strategy skeleton. No sir. Combat will be integral to your quest, as you rise from simple baron to King of Jerusalem, incorporating medium-sized battles of around 100-150 troops – considerably less than *Warrior Kings*. And the reason for this? Well if historians are to be believed – and personally I’ve never trusted one since Mr Weinerberger, my GCSE history teacher, tried to flank me during a game of Risk in his stationery cupboard – battles during this time and in this region usually consisted of less than 200 men per side. With these fairly small numbers, you’ll be able to concentrate more on utilising the stunning, fully tactical 3D terrain to your advantage.

Better still though, is the promise of realistic siege warfare. Not random pummelling of castle walls and then charging mindlessly in, but proper siege

“Crusaders will feature some superb AI, modelled on human behaviour”

warfare, where you line your crenulations with archers and rain down death on the massed enemy ranks below. Or as the attacker, target those very same walls with your mangonels, before ordering your archers to pick off the now exposed enemy forces. Or catapulting a diseased cow into the enemy’s castle and waiting for them to all drop dead from a hideous illness. Actually I made that last one up, but it would be fun.

City building will require loads of pre-planning, as keeping your population happy will be integral to keeping them productive. Plus sanitation and hygiene will be essential if you don’t want to have them pissing out of their backsides on the hour, every hour. Keep them happy and clean and they’ll haul granite and pick fruit for you all day. Otherwise, they’ll just sulk... and piss out of their backsides.

With four factions embroiled in the struggle for power, each with a collection of unique units (*Crusaders* will feature 26 different units in all), and some superb AI to defeat (modelled on human behaviour, so that your enemy identify strategically strong and weak points on each map), *Crusaders – Battle For Outremer* looks like it’s not only going to be one of the most visually stunning RTS games ever, but one of the most challenging, too. With just five months till its scheduled release date, I’d start getting excited now. **PCZ**





BULLETIN

THE RIGHT TO COUNTER-STRIKE



■ ASSOCIATE EDITOR Jamie Sefton

▲ Hi there. I'm the new boy here at *PC ZONE* and now I've got over the shock of the magazine's bizarre initiation ceremony (the lurid details of which I can never divulge on pain of death), I'll be bringing you the hottest news, gossip and exclusive screenshots from the world of PC games.

This month we've an exclusive on the space spectacular *X2 – The Threat*, new information on the violent third-person action game *Postal II*, and spanking screenshots on *Hover Ace*, *Platoon*, *The Great Escape* and *Warrior Kings – Battles*.

Our Bulletin section will be receiving a bit of a spit and polish over the next few months, so I'll also be introducing a few new regulars starting with Developer's Question Time (page 23) and the *PC ZONE* special report (page 16). This month Steve Hill has reported on the Greek gaming ban saga, where a new law meant to put a stop to illegal gambling led to the prosecution of Internet café owners who allowed PC games to be played. Thanks to political pressure from around the world, the Greek authorities have now given out guidelines to the police that will hopefully mean innocent people won't go to jail.

The chances of such a law being passed in the UK are pretty darn remote, but maybe we should be preparing to make sure we gamers have the political clout to challenge it if and when it happens. I suggest we set up a National Union of Gamers – the N.U.G. – with myself as union leader. I'm certainly loud-mouthed, opinionated and northern enough, and I can soon cultivate that bald comb-over hairstyle. The revolution starts here, comrades...

X marks the spot

Exclusive! *PC ZONE* speaks to the creators of space action-adventure *X2 – The Threat*



X2: The Threat is being billed as a 21st century *Elite*.



The go-faster stripes indicate this is a 'Dagenham Destroyer'.

EGOSOFT'S excellent 3D space blasting/trading game *X – Beyond The Frontier* received 90 per cent and *PC ZONE* Classic status on its release in 1999. Next year, the sequel *X2 – The Threat* will be launched, so we grabbed a batch of exclusive gorgeous screenshots and probed Egosoft's fiction co-author Darren Astles for the full story.

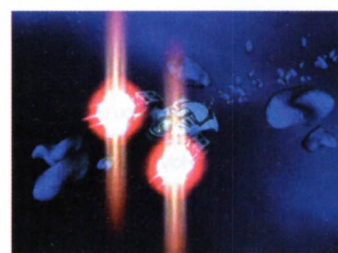
X2 – The Threat begins in a universe at war, with a terrifying new race – The Khaak – threatening to destroy Earth. "They swarm into the universe triggered by the storyline and then the player is taken on an ever-evolving series of missions with increasing demands and rewards," says Astles. "A selection of new ships and Khaak-only technology can be acquired giving a huge incentive to players."

In addition to the X-Prototype ship you commandeered in the first game, players will now have access to nearly every craft in the game, currently numbering more than 60. You can buy or steal ships to create

fleets that you either control remotely through issuing commands, or directly in first-person by jumping straight into the pilot or gunner's seat. A collection of new laser and missile systems are on offer along with a hull damage system, shields and new technologies like stealth, navigation and other secret items obtained through the storyline.

"Trading has also been refined for the sequel with more products, more ways of obtaining them and more career choices, such as miner, pirate, bounty hunter and trader," adds Astles. "A new cargo system has also been employed that only allows certain products to be ferried by particular ships."

Graphically, Egosoft is really squeezing the most out of the latest PC technology for advanced visual effects that actually add to the gameplay, such as gas cloud nebulae that players can hide in if they're in a particularly sticky situation. As for online play, there won't be direct player-versus-player



X2 is set 25 years after *X – Beyond The Frontier*, so the technology is much more advanced.



Over 60 ships will be available.

battles, which are destined for Egosoft's Online Universe that is also currently in development (www.online-universe.net). However Astles promises a 3D capture system will be available so players can capture their exploits and upload them to the Egosoft servers, as well as a Hall of Fame for registering high scores.

Currently bereft of a UK publisher, *X2 – The Threat* is scheduled for release some time next year. We'll hopefully have an exclusive movie on next month's *PC ZONE* discs. We spoil you lot, we really do...

Egosoft • ETA 2003 • www.egosoft.com/x/



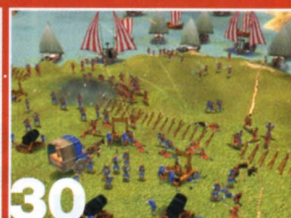
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EMULATION ZONE
Classic gaming given new life



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THE MAN WHO KNOWS
Recycling the industry's trash



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The McSims



Corporate giants Intel and McDonald's to feature in *The Sims Online*



The Sims Online is set to include virtual product placement.



Chat, or just perv away, like the Sim in the centre of the pic.

IN A MOVE that could open the floodgates for in-game advertising, Electronic Arts has signed a multimillion dollar deal with Intel and McDonald's that will see them integrated into the virtual world of *The Sims Online* on its release next year.

Players who use the high-end Pentium 4 processor-equipped PCs in the game to open a cyber cafe or play games will increase their Sims' logic and fun ratings faster than if they use generic lower-spec machines. McDonald's restaurants meanwhile, will be available to gamers as a business to earn 'Simoleons' or as a place to eat in order to satisfy their hunger and fun needs.

The fact that your Sims are actually rewarded by using these multinational companies' products could be seen as a cynical exploitation of the franchise, but EA disagrees. "The game runs much like real life," says Jeff Brown, EA's US vice-

president of corporate communications. "You can eat at home or you can eat out. You can be a vegetarian or you can eat meat. As in life itself, the Sim player gets to choose how to eat."

He goes on: "I'm going to guess that most of *The Sims*' audience are familiar with McDonald's and make the same kind of choices every day. In that sense, it's hard to imagine that anyone would be surprised or confused about this element of the game." According to Brown, several other companies are also considering agreements to sponsor EA's videogames.

You may think that this incorporation of corporate sponsors into the actual gameplay of our beloved PC titles is somewhat distasteful. But that doesn't mean that, for example, when *The Sims Online* is released, you should go out and create skins for your Sims that resemble anti-capitalist protestors, gather outside the virtual



McDonald's with other online chums and smash all the windows. **PC ZONE** believes that would be absolutely and utterly wrong.

EA Games • ETA 2003 •
www.eagames.com/eagames

Golden games

Who will pick up a prestigious Golden Joystick Award?

EXCITEMENT IS BEGINNING to build, impromptu speeches are frantically being written and Jonathan Ross is already easing himself into a pair of skintight red leather trousers. Yes, the 2002 Golden Joystick Awards are almost here:

PC Game of the Year

Grand Theft Auto III
Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind
Neverwinter Nights
Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast
Warcraft 3: Reign Of Chaos

Online Game of the Year

Counter-Strike
Day Of Defeat
Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault
Phantasy Star Online v2 (Dreamcast)
Return To Castle Wolfenstein
Warcraft III: Reign Of Chaos

Game Innovation of the Year

Open-ended play in Grand Theft Auto III
D-Day landing in
Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault
Style Of Ice (PS2)

Mission creation tools in
Neverwinter Nights
Bullet Time in Max Payne
Control system in Pikmin (GameCube)

For a full list of all videogame categories and a chance to vote before the ceremony takes place on October 25 at the Dorchester Hotel in London, visit www.goldenjoystick.co.uk. We'll have a full report on the glitz and glamour of the biggest award ceremony in the videogame industry next month, with a list of all the winners and an interview with the host Jonathan Ross.



SHORTS

KEEP ON TOLKIEN



Vivendi Universal is planning to develop more games based on its prized Tolkien licence, announcing four new titles destined for PC. Although, when we say new, one of them was a re-confirmation of the long-awaited *Lord Of The Rings* MMORPG, *Middle-Earth Online*. Various non-specific titles based on the next two books in the trilogy are also to appear in coming years, following on from their imminent *Fellowship Of The Ring* game. However, one genuine revelation was the announcement of an *LOTR* real-time strategy game, *The War Of The Ring*. No release dates or images yet, but we'll keep you posted. Turn to page 18 for info on Vivendi's new Marvel online game.

FRESH AIR



Oxygen Interactive is the name of a new games publisher planning to release a raft of PC titles next year. First up is *Red Shark* (above), a third-person helicopter blaster developed by Russian company G5 Software, due in February 2003. This will be followed by RPGs *Paradise Cracked* and *Spells Of Gold*, the flight sim *Echelon: Wind Warriors*, adventure game *Midnight Nowhere* and FPS *March! Offworld Recon*. However, Oxygen's most bizarre release next year has to be *Darkened Skye*, a fantasy game based around, ahem, Skittles confectionery...

HEATH MAGIC



Hold onto your wizard's sleeve – a new RPG called *Heath: The Unchosen Path* is raring to go next year from GMX Media. *Heath* is set in the mythical world of GoldenLand and has 35 locations, 150 kinds of non-player characters and 30 non-linear quests. Developed by Russian company Burut Creative, the game promises a smart new magic system and graphics with dynamic lighting. However, just to be clear, *Heath: The Unchosen Path* is not, repeat not, about the 1970s Conservative Prime Minister, Ted Heath. For more info check out www.gmxmedia.net/heath.

Soil your trousers

Britisher Pigs! You *will* be excited about ze new game *The Great Escape!*



The Great Escape features scenarios from the movie.



Escape from Skegness Butlins was going to be tough...

ONE OF STEVE McQueen's greatest Hollywood film roles was as Hilt 'the Cooler King' in the WWII prisoner of war epic, *The Great Escape*. Now you'll be able to recreate the moment his brave motorcyclist figure crashes headfirst into barbed wire with the announcement of SCI's new game based on the movie.

Featuring likenesses of many of the characters from the film, *The Great Escape* has 20 levels. The first eight provide the back story, and show how the main characters end up in Stalag Luft III. Four levels take place in the infamous camp itself, and the last eight follow the various escapees as they desperately try to get back to Blighty.

"Overall, the game follows the storyline of the film quite closely," says Pete Johnson, producer at developer Pivotal Games. "There are FMV sequences that back up the levels and explain some elements that could not be put into gameplay."

Sequences in the Stalag Luft III camp are stealth-based involving the use of disguises, waiting for search lights to pass by, and gathering information. However, the main difference to Codemasters' *Prisoner Of War* game is that there are also exciting arcade-style levels that include shoot-outs on a moving train and chases involving various Nazi vehicles.

"In some levels the player gets his hands on a motorbike and then a good chase ensues with the Germans on their motorbikes close on your heels," continues Johnson. "They will try to ram you off the road as well as trying to kick you off your bike, and of course you can do the same to them!"

Although *The Great Escape* sounds promising, we're still hoping for a bonus mini-game along the lines of *Dig Dug* with Nazis. We'll have more news from behind the wire very soon.

Pivotal Games • ETA Q2 2003 • www.pivotalgames.com

New kingdoms

Expansion pack *Tribunal* unveiled for Bethesda Softworks' RPG *Morrowind*



A Helseth guard enjoys a holiday in *Quake III*.

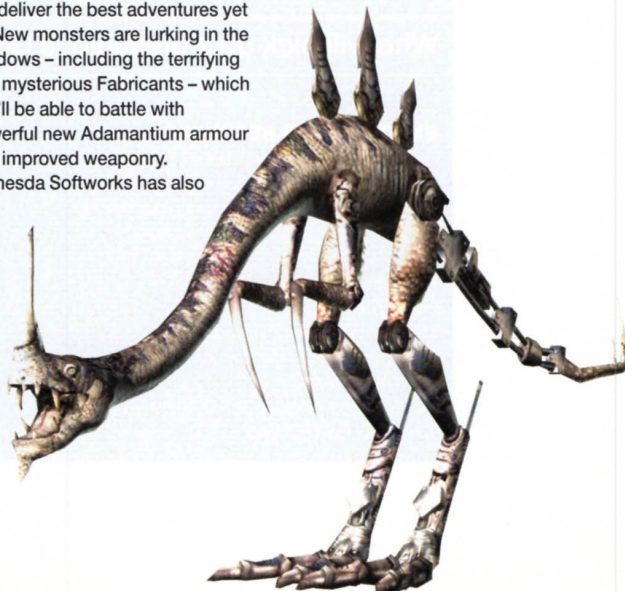
MORE GOBLINS are swarming towards the PC with the announcement of an expansion pack to the popular role-playing game *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*. *Tribunal* takes place against a backdrop of unrest in the kingdom, as a new ruthless king plunges Morrowind into chaos. You must go on a quest to the capital city Mournhold, a massive city with immense dungeons underground that Bethesda Softworks reckon will deliver the best adventures yet.

New monsters are lurking in the shadows – including the terrifying and mysterious Fabricants – which you'll be able to battle with powerful new Adamantium armour and improved weaponry. Bethesda Softworks has also

been listening to fans' criticism, so there'll be an improved journal system for sorting out quests, and a new map you can annotate, which will be useful for keeping a track of important items.

The Elder Scrolls III: Tribunal is scheduled for release in November through publisher Ubi Soft.

Bethesda Softworks • ETA November • www.elderscrolls.com



Konami go PC barmy

The Japanese videogames giant unveils its latest PC gaming plans



MGS2: *Substance* (left) and *Apocalyptica* – two Konami titles.



Eike from *Shadow Of Memories* contemplates death – again.

IT APPEARS THAT Japan, the spiritual home of videogames, is finally starting to realise that PCs exist. Konami, one of the biggest Japanese games companies, is planning to launch a whole raft of PC titles next spring. Hideo Kojima's fabulous stealthy adventure *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance* is probably the most anticipated game currently on its way to our beloved white boxes. However, also in development is the spooky, third-person murder mystery *Shadow Of Memories*.

Currently being converted in Konami's newly established European R&D studios, *Shadow Of Memories* is a spooky, third-person murder mystery that takes place in a nameless European city. Hero Eike Kusch is murdered, but when he awakes in a mysterious void, a strange figure called Homunulus offers him the chance to discover who is trying to kill him. Using a special device, Eike jumps back and forward through eight time zones, meeting nefarious characters and discovering clues.

Eike dies during every episode, but each death brings him closer to understanding his fate.

Other titles mooted for release include the gambling sim *Casino* and the 3D Films-developed third-person Satan blaster *Apocalyptica* – both PC originals. We'll have exclusive details on all these potentially belting Konami titles very soon.

Konami • ETA 2003 • www.konami.com

Red letter day

Ultra-violence, bloody gun battles and Gary Coleman? *Postal II* is being delivered...

THE VIOLENT, ISOMETRIC 3D game *Postal* wasn't really a must-have PC title in 1997. Let's face it, the only thing controversial about *Postal* was the fact you had to pay £30 for what was a pretty shoddy game. However, that hasn't deterred US developer Running With Scissors is currently coding an even more gory and over-the-top first-person shooter sequel.

"*Postal II* is bigger and badder than anyone can imagine," says outspoken CEO Vince Desi. "We're using *Unreal* technology, Karma physics, and over 100 unique characters in an open world of action and adventure. The Postal Dude is back and this time he's looking for Gary Coleman!"

Coleman, who used to star in the US TV series *Diff'rent Strokes*, appears in the game after being motion-captured for many of *Postal II*'s gun-toting sequences. "Gary

Coleman is a classic pop icon in America," continues Desi. "In *Postal II*, you play a week in the life of the Postal Dude, and one of the things he tries to do is to get Gary Coleman's autograph."

Postal II promises cool character AI, tons of offensive dialogue, extreme violence and new ridiculous weapons – such as a shovel – which happens to be Desi's favourite at the moment. "I like using the shovel to chop people's heads off, as we've now added a new feature that lets you play with them." Sick, twisted and probably offensive to 99 per cent of people on the planet, *Postal II* is definitely one game that we're looking forward to getting our hands on. Let's hope it's bloody great.

Running With Scissors • ETA spring 2003 • www.gopostal.com



"Watchoo talkin' about Willis?" Gary Coleman goes bad.



Postal II is bound to re-ignite the 'violence in videogames' debate, with its no-holds-barred spillage of virtual blood and guts. Yum.



The Greek Government recently passed a law making it illegal to play computer and videogames in the country. This is not a joke. *Steve Hill* investigates

Passed in Athens on July 29, 2002, Law 3037 – Gaming Prohibition was introduced ostensibly in an attempt to stem the country's illegal gambling problems. However, it appears to have been rushed through after a prominent member of the Government was captured on film playing

Greek gamers were understandably horrified at these events, and have rallied against the law, with an online petition rapidly acquiring some 30,000 names. One of the campaigners is 33-year-old computer programmer Costas Sgantzos,

Apparently Ladbrokes still aren't giving odds on *Counter-Strike*.



“British tourists could have been banged up for the heinous crime of playing *Tetris* on the beach”

INDIANAPOLIS, USA Children banned from playing violent arcade games.

UK PC ZONE removed for running a spoof piece called Cruelty Zoo, allegedly based on Lara Croft.

UK Government watchdogs try to ban *Day Of Defeat*, claiming it is 'part of a trend helping to make Nazism acceptable.'

TURKEY Health Minister Osman Durmas vows to crack down on evil *Pokémon* phenomenon.

USA Moral crusaders call for ban on *Panty Raider*; *From Here To Immaturity*, labelling it 'exploitative and damaging'.

GERMANY Following school shooting, Conservative MP Edmund Stoiber calls for ban on violent games.

BRAZIL No messing about, they banned all violent games.

AUSTRALIA *GTA III* is banned due to its controversial content.



Just days after Steve Hill's one-man vigil outside the Greek Embassy, the Government backed down. Coincidence? We think not.

who spoke exclusively to *PC ZONE*. Like us, he initially thought that the whole thing was a ruse.

"It was far too extreme and sick, even for a joke," explained Costas. "They were supposed to be creating a law that would ban only the electronic gambling machines – not every electronic machine! When I learned that it was voted in at the Greek Parliament, I asked for a hard copy of the law. I was ready to start an international campaign for its abrogation if it was true, which was exactly what I did the very next day."

So did the Government make a terrible error? "Yes. I strongly believe that it was a political move – an attempt to scapegoat a member of the Greek Government. A TV show caught him on film, gambling on this type of machine back in February 2002. The resulting law was passed quickly, was badly written and expressed, and ultimately did not manage to serve its primary purpose – the ban of the electronic gambling games."

Armed with a copy of the law, we approached the Greek Embassy in London, where we were eventually allowed to speak to press counsellor, Dr Nicholas Papadakis. He claimed: "This law is aimed primarily, if not exclusively, at people who set up shop where they have computers, or machines of a mechanical nature, and they offer services to the public, to the punter, that can be gambled on. The idea of the legislature was that they would try and ban any sort of games that could be played interactively and be used for gambling. So the idea is not to prohibit people playing chess on the computer, for example, but if you do that interacting with somebody else and you put a bet on it then that is considered to be gambling."

Article 2 of the law refers to games being played in public places, but as Papadakis said: "This law applies to gambling taking place either publicly or privately." In theory then, you can be nicked for playing a game – with the potential for gambling – in the safety of your own home. Papadakis says that this is unlikely: "If I'm found playing a game on my PC, I'm not

going to be arrested. Any kid playing a computer or a Game Boy or a PlayStation is not going to be arrested. Like any law, it's how you interpret it. Laws can be interpreted in various ways. The idea is to ban any illegal gambling, but if a kid walks down the street playing something on his Game Boy, he is not going to be arrested."

That would appear to be in direct contradiction to the minutiae of the law, but Papadakis was adamant: "Believe me, if you go to Athens tomorrow morning and

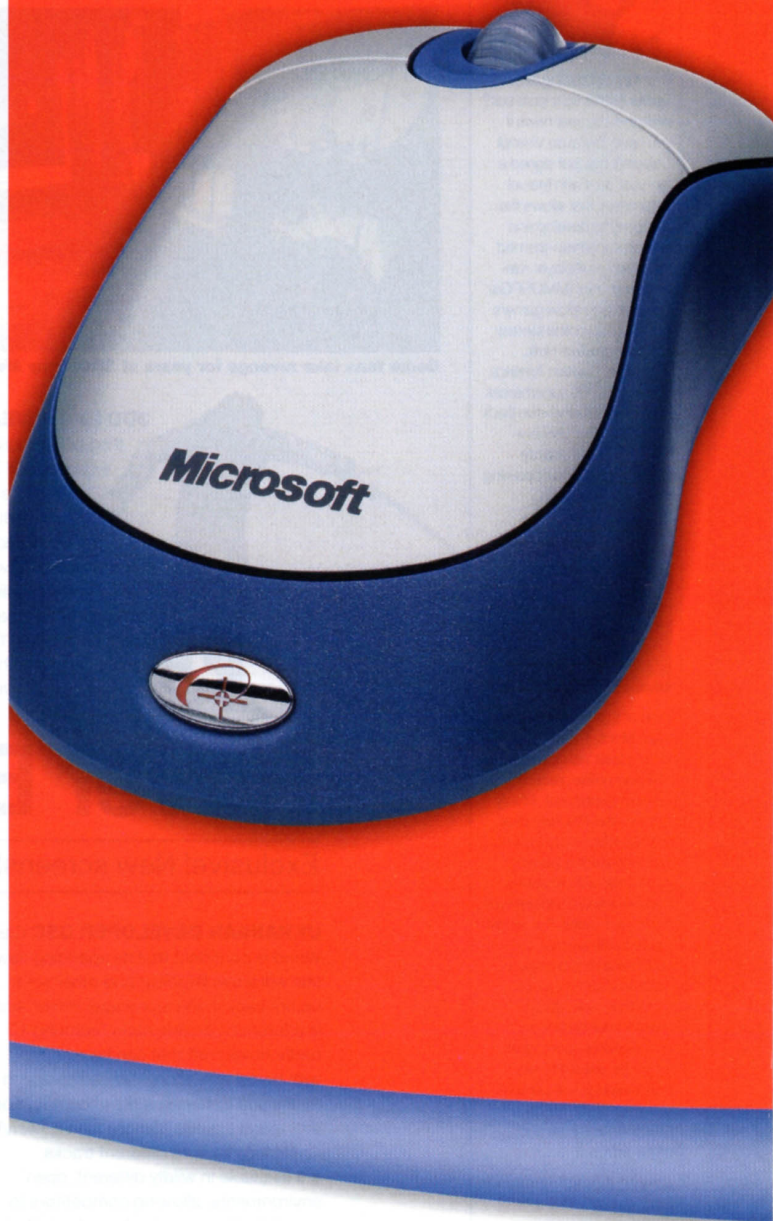
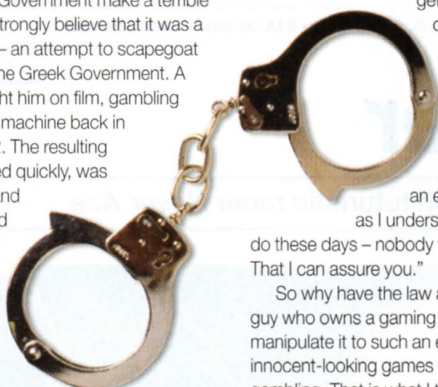
get off the plane, come out the airport, walk down the street, turn on your mobile phone and start playing an electronic game –

as I understand you can do these days – nobody will arrest you. That I can assure you."

So why have the law at all? "Any guy who owns a gaming machine can manipulate it to such an extent that innocent-looking games can be turned into gambling. That is what I think the rationale behind the law is." By that rationale though, you'd have to ban coins in case people started gambling on heads or tails. When I point this out to the press counsellor, he accuses me of starting a philosophical discussion, which is certainly a first. As for the non-application of the law, he makes a comparison with the driving laws.

Either way, Law 3037 has seen people arrested (around 50, according to the BBC), for no other reason other than that games were being played on their premises, and that has to be wrong. Two days after I spoke to the Embassy, the Greek Government issued a clarification of the law, attempting to differentiate between gambling machines and games machines. They also made a point of stating that foreign tourists are allowed to use games consoles in the country, which will no doubt provide reassurance to the holiday industry.

While the law hasn't actually been changed, this seems to be a step in the right direction, and it is to be hoped that there are no further arrests. As for Law 3037 being abolished totally, Costas Sgantzios said: "I could bet on it, but then again that would be illegal."



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SHORTS

MARVEL-OUS
MMORPG!

Ever fancied getting into Spider-Man's tight lycra suit? Well, there's great news if you have, because Vivendi Universal has just signed a ten-year deal with Marvel Enterprises that allows the company to develop and publish superhero-themed massively multiplayer role-playing games (MMORPGs). The plan is to allow gamers to live out an online fantasy as The Incredible Hulk, Wolverine, Captain America or one of 4,700 superheroes from Marvel's extensive back catalogue. Our very own Martin Korda is already looking forward to becoming the Invisible Woman.

FLOGGING
A DEAD PARROT

Fans of the surreal comedy team Monty Python could be in for a treat with the launch of a new online game from ClassicComedy.net. *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* is a silly *Worms*-style game featuring knights blasting each other with weapons such as a holy hand grenade and a killer rabbit. The single-player levels are free, but you'll have to subscribe to BattleMail.com or send a premium rate SMS to register your best score on a global hi-score table. If it's a hit, expect to see blasphemous first-person shooters based on *The Life Of Brian* by the end of the year...

JOWOOD'S
PRODUCTION LINE

Capitalist-sim *Industry Giant II* is about to get a boost with a smart new add-on pack. Three new campaigns with 20 missions are included, and now feature AI opponents and – wait for it – ports. This means gamers can now import or export exotic items such as tea or coffee for huge profits. JoWood is also squeezing in 30 Endless mode maps, new multiplayer maps and an editor for creating your own games. *Industry Giant II Add On* will be released in November at £19.99.

Bible bashing

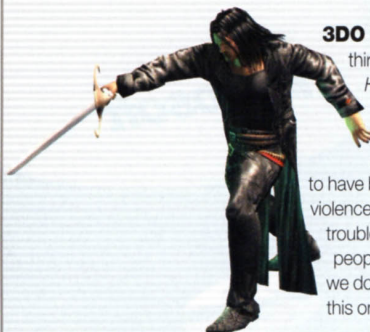
Get God on your side in *Four Horseman Of The Apocalypse*



Game fans take revenge for years of 3DO *Army Men* games.



Who lives in a house like this? (The answer's Famine.)



3DO HAS REVEALED further details of its biblical third-person action game, the controversial *Four Horseman Of The Apocalypse*.

Executive producer Kelly Turner says: "It's a big departure for us. We've got to do adult content for adult game players. We're going to have brief nudity, we'll have language, we'll have violence, and the biblical content may get us into trouble. We've already had a few emails, it's mostly people who think they know Revelations better than we do, they think this character should be named this or that... they're really getting into the specifics."

Kelly also let slip who will be providing the voice talent. Having auditioned 400 actors for the nine main parts, 3DO has settled on an eclectic cast that includes Alien star Lance Henriksen as archangel Abbaddon, erstwhile porn actress Traci Lords as Pestilence, and game veteran Tim Curry as the voice of Satan, no less.

As for the extreme violence promised, we were privy to a few of the finishing moves, and can confirm that they are a tad graphic. God knows what the finished game will be like.

3DO • ETA Q3 2003 • www.3do.com

Hover Bover

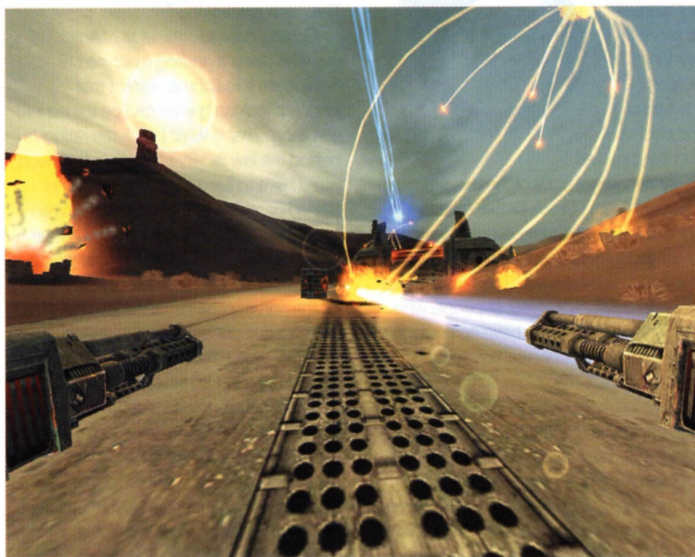
Exclusive! New screenshots and info on futuristic racer *Hover Ace*

UKRAINIAN DEVELOPER GSC Game World is confident that its sparkling new title will leave *WipeOut* and other sci-fi racers back in the stone age. *Hover Ace* is a futuristic arcade racer featuring 15 battle hovercraft that can be equipped with brutal weaponry and devices such as mines and battering rams in competitions that reach speeds of more than 500km/h.

No less than 16 different tracks are available in wildly different, open environments, allowing competitors to negotiate the race checkpoints via their own shortcuts and special routes. All the courses are packed with hidden bonuses, such as destructible items, and winning races brings players much-needed cash which can be used to upgrade their vehicles with better armour, engines and other gizmos. Nine intelligent computer-controlled opponents will compete against your ship in various single and multiplayer games, including the classic Time Trial and Last Man Standing modes.

Although *Hover Ace* is almost complete, GSC doesn't have a UK publisher, so we may have to wait until the new year for the game to hit the shelves. In the meantime, feast your peepers on these scorching screenshots.

GSC Gameworld • ETA TBC •
www.gsc-game.com



For the full impact, imagine hearing laser blasts over an Orbital soundtrack.

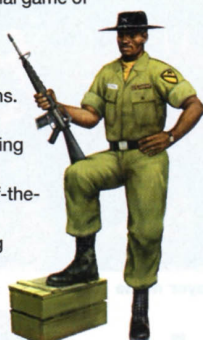


N...n...nineteen

With *Platoon*, it seems the first casualty of war is merchandising

VIETNAM IS the guerre de jour for game designers, it seems. Digital Reality (also appearing in the *Haegemonia* preview on page 58) is the latest team giving us a glimpse into the war-torn past. *Platoon* is the official game of the film, taking a 3D RTS approach as you battle through 15 missions.

The Hungarian developer is boasting realistic combat dynamics, state-of-the-art effects and experience gaining soldiers, with events inspired by the war and the



film. However, there was little evidence of the film on show when Digital Reality demonstrated the game to us at Monte Cristo's Milton Keynes offices, with the more controversial elements of the film (village burning, raping, murder etc) unlikely to appear in the finished product.

Instead it seems *Platoon* is going to head along the more traditional squad-based RTS route, with aspects of the film appearing in the background. This opens up the whole 'waste of a licence' argument, but if seeing the *Platoon* logo on the box helps sales then you could say it has done the job. We'll see if the game remains faithful this November.

Monte Cristo • ETA November 2002 •
<http://www.montecristogames.com>

Spawn enemies

Laser Squad Nemesis adds a third race to the game of tactical email warfare



The insidious Spawn are reminiscent of the bugs in *Starship Troopers*.

FOR THOSE OF you yet to sample the delights of *Laser Squad Nemesis*, we can only stress again how good this game is. Free to download, played by email and offering some of the deepest tactical manoeuvring this side of a game of chess, *LSN* is a minor marvel of Internet gaming.

To date, the game has offered only two playable sides, the Machina and the Marines, but a recent beta update has added the long-promised third race – the despicable insectoids known as the Spawn.



Unlike the other races, the Spawn can replenish their ranks courtesy of Queen units, which consume their victims and lays eggs that produce a random offspring.

The new race is still in testing, but you can contribute to the beta test by downloading the game from the website below. Version 2.0 of the game, with the finished Spawn faction, is due any time now.

Codo Technologies • ETA Now available •
www.lasersquadenesis.com



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BULLETIN

TOP STORY | NEWS | EMULATION ZONE | THE

Ye Goode Life

The Sims go medieval in *Europa 1400: The Guild*

OK, SO IT'S actually not much like *The Sims*, but *Europa 1400: The Guild* is a self-proclaimed 'real-life simulation', combining RPG, sim and strategy elements in a strange olde worlde concoction.

Resembling little that has gone before, *The Guild* allows you to create a character with a name, a house, a job, even a set of parents, and work on building up your status in 15th-century society. Choosing from 12 different career paths including priest, barkeep and thief, you must cultivate your reputation and influence by any means necessary – which generally means being extremely nasty and duplicitous.

Employ spies to keep tabs on your rivals, become a council member and rewrite the laws to your own ends, even

collect evidence against your friends and have them brutally tortured – Machiavelli would definitely approve of this game.

Depending on how much of your actual life you're willing to forgo, you can either play a free, open-ended game or set yourself specific tasks. You might want to satisfy your basest desires, amass a large fortune through theft or become a powerful figure in the church. Or more likely, all three.

It's certainly a novel concept, and one with no shortage of ambition, though with such hardcore leanings, you may have to study a punishing course on Medieval history before you play...

4Head Studios • ETA October 18 •
www.the-guild.com



Sounds! There's even an 8-way multiplayer mode

Activate!



Robot Wars hits the PC with *Extreme Destruction*

ROBOT WARS ISN'T something you easily admit to liking. All those bearded boffins tinkering with engines belonging to robots called 'Electro-Bastard' – you can almost taste the stifling BO in those workshops. However, stumble home after a night in the pub and suddenly it all makes sense when Craig Charles starts rhyming in scouse and the metal behemoths spark it out in the arenas.

Extreme Destruction is the latest *Robot Wars* game on PC and allows fans to design and build their own robots, with hundreds of different parts available. Once you've made your killer 'bot, you can battle against three other players in arenas that include a car factory, an aircraft carrier and a space station, complete with random zero gravity. As well as the usual Annihilator deathmatches, there are nine other types of games such as Sumo and Football.

All the famous robots from the show are featured, including Matilda and Sir Killalot, plus commentary on the action by shouty Channel 5 football bloke, Jonathan Pearce. We've had a play of early code and it seems entertaining



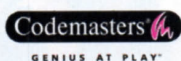
Trainspotters will be doubly pleased...

enough, although our pathetic home-made tin foil robot was trashed in seconds. We'll hopefully review *Robot Wars: Extreme Destruction* next issue.

Climax • ETA November •
www.bbcmultimedia.com

COMPETITION

Win the chance
to be a Prisoner
Of War!



20 copies of *Prisoner Of War* are ready to be liberated...



PRISONER OF WAR is one of the most novel and original WWII-themed action games to appear on PC in years, providing a cracking story with the emphasis on stealth and cunning, rather than extreme violence. So, it's rather nice that the jolly people at Codemasters have given us no less than 20 copies of *Prisoner Of War* to give away to you sprightly readers out there.

In *Prisoner Of War*, those pesky Nazis are up to no good yet again. Hitler and chums have captured brave Yank pilot Captain Lewis Stone, who has to escape to warn the Allies of a plan to develop a devastating rocket that could obliterate London. Stone has to use his intelligence to work out escape routes from camps that are run on a strict time regime. Finding gaps in the camps' schedules allows you to pilfer office keys from careless chefs or steal clothing from under the noses of vigilant and armed Nazi guards.

To stand a chance of winning a copy of this spiffing WWII action/adventure, simply answer the brain-boggling question that

follows and send it on a postcard to the usual **PC ZONE** address.

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE FAMOUS WWII GERMAN CASTLE THAT'S FEATURED IN PRISONER OF WAR?

A: Colditz
B: Caernarfon
C: Windsor

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Plague of Serpents
OR Prosperity for all...



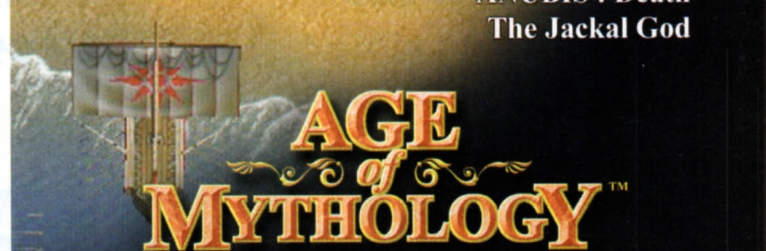
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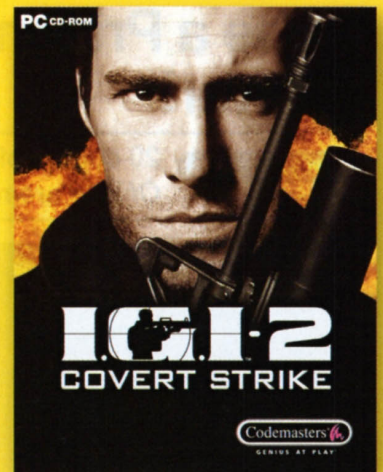
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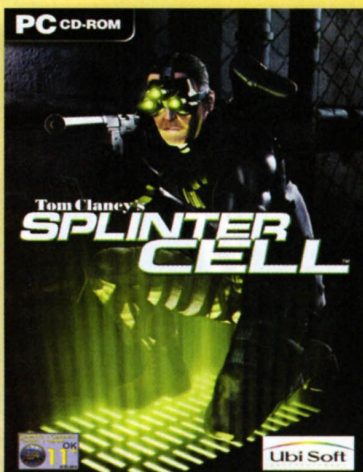
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Orcs out for the Lads

Online RPG *Shadowbane* moves closer to release. Exclusive details!



Dress up as a New Romantic for bonus points.

HOPING TO CHALLENGE the online gaming worlds of *EverQuest* and *Star Wars Galaxies* is Wolfpack Studios' *Shadowbane*. Developed in Germany, the massively multiplayer role-playing game has a fantasy theme, complete with the usual stampeding herds of orcs, giants and other mythical creatures.

Players begin the adventure as a character from one of 10 races, including elves and centaurs, in starting towns, building their own strongholds and forging alliances with other city guilds. You can form bands of men to attack other settlements, kill monsters for bounty or go on quests for magical items, using a fully-customisable chat window.

The latest news from the beta version currently on-test for Europe, is that there have been graphical



The green bars next to the characters are for health.

improvements for characters, towns and outdoor environments, plus a petition system is now working that allows you to ask the Swing! employees to help you out online if you encounter any problems.

Also now included is a smart siege feature that allows armies of players grouping together to lay siege around enemy settlements, attacking with trebuchets and other weaponry. Set fire to cities and they'll burn down realistically, causing havoc to rival players.

We'll have a full review of *Shadowbane* when the game goes live, which publisher Swing! Entertainment reckons will be November in the UK. Watch this space.

Wolfpack Studios • ETA November •
www.shadowbane.de

Anarchy in the UK

The latest on Silver Style's post-apocalyptic RTS *Soldiers Of Anarchy*



You can order jets to bomb whole areas.

IT'S 2014. A biological weapon has wiped out 96 per cent of the world's population. You've just crawled out of a hole in the ground, your lovely home for the past ten years, only to discover that a brutal society has sprung up built on the slave trade. You decide to take up arms and violently destroy the gangs that have enslaved thousands of people.

Nope, this isn't the scenario of the latest Arnie blockbuster, it is in fact the backdrop to a new RTS from developer Silver Style. *Soldiers Of Anarchy* allows you to control up to 12 different characters, each with varying personalities such as medic, sniper and explosives expert. There are 13 huge 2km x 2km levels to work through in tough environments ranging from icy wastelands to a dense tropical jungle. Luckily, you'll have the ability to commandeer more than 30 different vehicles to transport your team and blast enemies,



The cadet's tank driving exam wasn't going well.

including tanks, jeeps and helicopters.

Silver Style has also managed to pack in an extensive map editor for designing your own levels, plus online multiplayer options for 12 gamers. *Soldiers Of Anarchy* is due for release on November 22, however publisher Big Ben has promised a very special and exclusive new playable demo for you lucky readers in next month's *PC ZONE* on sale November 14.

Silver Style • ETA November 22 •
www.soldiers-of-anarchy.com



DEVELOPERS' QUESTION TIME



This month: Charles Cecil, managing director of Revolution Software

What PC games are you playing at the moment?

Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault, and the *Worms* compilation, both of which involve firing dangerous weapons at an evil enemy.

What was the last videogame you finished?

Max Payne. The game had many faults, but the Bullet Time feature kept the gameplay addictive and, while clichéd, the story was fun.

What is your favourite game of all time?

Grand Theft Auto III. The closest thing to what an 'Interactive Movie' should have been all along.

What are you most proud of in your career?

Furthering the development of narrative-driven games, and having created titles that have entertained millions of players.

Who do you most admire in the industry and why?

It is not an original choice, but it has to be Shigeru Miyamoto (Nintendo). As technology has advanced, he has continued to deliver extraordinary games that make huge creative leaps.

What has the PC contributed most to videogaming?

Innovation. The lack of a format holder allows anyone to write games – which has allowed great diversity.

What is your company's philosophy?

To mix narrative with great gameplay and create games that appeal across the whole spectrum of players.

What's the best thing about your job?

Having the opportunity to drive the vision of a game.

What's the worst thing about your job?

Being ultimately responsible when it all goes wrong.

What are you working on at the moment?

Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon – which we're tremendously excited about. We have some other projects on the go at the moment that we haven't announced yet.

Finally, what's the Next Big Thing in PC gaming?

A resurgence of single-player gaming.

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"There's nothing quite like being repulsed, feeling paranoid and shaken by fear" *PSI-2 Magazine*



"Great script, a twist of 'sci fi' horror, lurid graphics, a high bullet count, and some gut spinning biological realities. Be excited. Be very excited" *XGamer Magazine*



"The atmosphere is spot on, perfectly capturing the icy austerity of the John Carpenter film" *PCG Magazine*

"Top-class survival horror meets one of the best sci-fi movies of all time. Excellent"
9/10 Official PlayStation 2 magazine



"Terror? Tension? Paranoia?
The Thing delivers it all" *PC Format*

"Terror never felt so good"
PC GAMER "Game of Distinction"



PC CD-ROM

PlayStation 2

XBOX



COMPUTER ARTWORKS

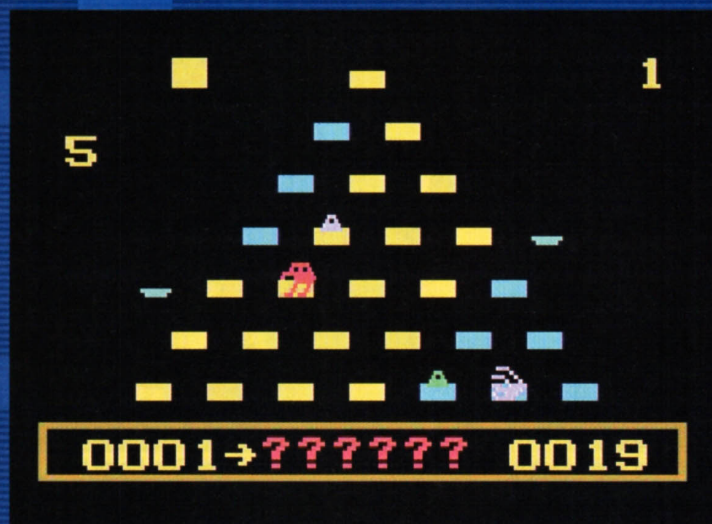


www.thethinggames.com

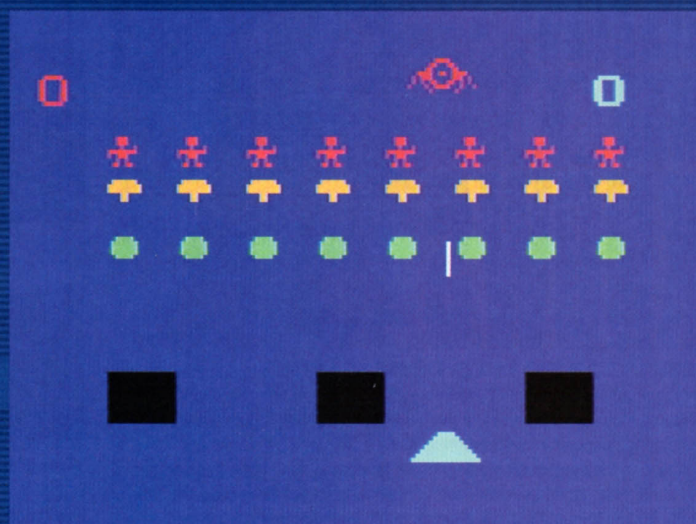
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EMULATION ZONE

Breaking news from the world of emulation, with retro reanimator *Stuart Campbell*



Q*bert: great game but an even better DJ.



Emu Zone's personal best is three - just in case you were wondering.

THIS IS HARDCORE

WE LIVE, VIEWERS, in the world of the quick-save. Through a combination of gamers being whiny wimps who complain if they can't see every level of a game the same day they buy it, and designers being lazy incompetents who can't provide a sense of challenge

without unpredictably killing the player and relying on him having quick-saved, almost all of the tension and edge has been taken out of gaming. So you can probably only imagine how excited Emulation Zone was to recently uncover the world's most hardcore game console.

The Odyssey², known in this country as the Philips Videopac G7000, was an ill-fated attempt to compete with the 'Big Two' of late-'70s home console gaming - the Atari VCS and the Intellivision. It was ill fated because it was technically primitive compared to the other two, and had a slightly nerdy 'educational' feel thanks to its ZX81-style touch-sensitive keyboard. But what the Odyssey² had going for it, that meant nothing at the time but seems somehow heroic now, was its sheer rock-hardness. In almost

all of the 70-odd games that came out for the console, you only get one life. No shields, no energy bars, no second chances. You get hit, it's game over. Reality gaming.

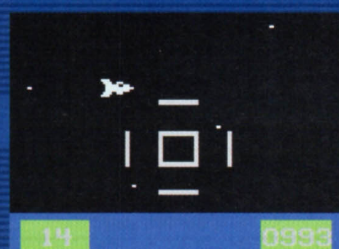
However, the system's most successful title, *Alien Invaders*, was even more ferocious. Though you did get defence bunkers in this one, you were faced with four lines of enemies, the first of which comprised indestructible moving shields. Every time you got hit, you had to sacrifice one of your own defence bunkers to supply your replacement laser base. And in the highly unlikely event that you managed to fend off the barrage of alien fire and wipe out the entire screen, you know how many points you got? One. Shooting the boss monster scored zero, shooting the aliens scored zero, doing

anything except wiping out a whole screen - zero. Games with one life that almost always ended in a score of zero - modern gamers are such pussies.

Of course, all this would be nowt but a history lesson (albeit an extremely absorbing one), were the machine not able to be emulated on the safety of your modern personal computer. And of course it is, with the excellent O2EM. The emu has just received a major update, ironing out problems such as inaccurate colour palette and audio pitch, and adding support for more European/PAL games (including versions of *Frogger* and *Depth Charge*). Check it out if you think you're hard enough.

LINKS

www.classicgaming.com/o2home - O2EM homepage



This is gaming at its hardest.

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

▲ MANIC MINER (SAM Coupé, 1992)

The SAM Coupé was one of the strangest computers ever launched. Basically a souped-up ZX Spectrum (and backwards-compatible with the Sinclair machine), it came out right at the end of the Spectrum's life, just as the 16-bit platforms such as the Mega Drive were coming to prominence.

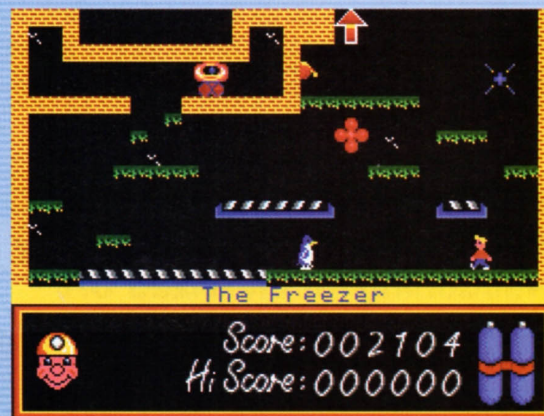
In one of the least surprising developments in gaming history, the SAM stiffed spectacularly, and the format played host to very few games (though it did host decent conversions of *Lemmings* and *Prince Of Persia*). The Coupé's greatest moment, however, was its version of the Speccy classic *Manic Miner*. Actually three games in one, the SAM's *Manic Miner* featured the original 20 levels plus two all-new, excellently designed 'sequels', bringing in a few new features and bumping up the graphic and sonic qualities

somewhat. The real innovation, though, was that the coders doubled the speed of the original game, turning what was a rather pedestrian effort by '90s standards into a fast and fingernail-chewingly addictive game more in the style of *Chuckie Egg* - one lapse in concentration or coordination and its game over. (No quick-save here either, you blouses.)

Manic Miner has just been revamped and released for the GameBoy Advance, but the SAM Coupé version handles the same task immeasurably better, and Emulation Zone hasn't been able to put it down all month.

LINKS

<http://mess.emuverse.com/> - MESS (multi-system emu) homepage
www.simcoupe.org - Download the SimCoupé emulator



You've got no chance of getting this far, wimps.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS



BILL GATES HAS RUMMAGED down the back of his sofa and pulled out 240 million quid to buy fêted UK developer **Rare**. Microsoft's acquisition of the team behind **GoldenEye** guarantees exclusive games for its floundering **Xbox** console, thus supposedly pissing in the eyes of erstwhile partner **Nintendo**, who have handed over their 49 per cent stake. However, 'Ninty' issued a scathing broadside to their former lovers. "If you looked at their more recent titles, they were not working out for us, and we felt we could get better value by investing our money in other ways," blasted **George Harrison**, senior vice-president of marketing and corporate communications for Nintendo of America. "To be honest, we're glad to see the back of them, the lazy twats," the dead Beatle's namesake didn't add. Meanwhile, the three Rare founders, the **Stamper** brothers, who are believed to have pocketed some £40m each from the deal, claimed: "It's not about the money, it's about making games." My hairy arse.

After festering in development hell for over six years, it has been revealed that if Warner Bros does not begin work on the long-awaited **Doom** film within 15 months, then the rights will revert back to **id Software**. Two producers have been appointed, and although there is currently no script for the film, it is believed to be based largely on the storyline of the forthcoming festival of blood-letting, **Doom III**. Somewhat surprisingly, given the horrifying amount of mutilation and violent death within the game, Warner is aiming for a PG-13 rating. An expert said: "What's the point? You might as well ask Disney to remake 'Cannibal Holocaust'."

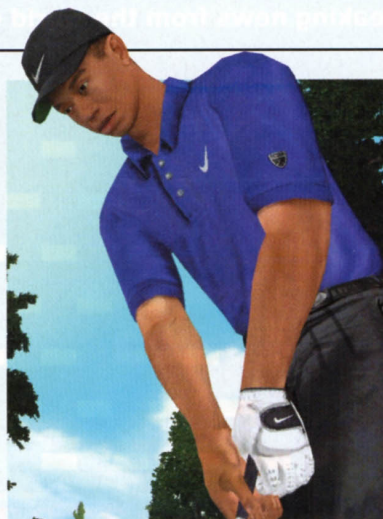
Mythical creatures who populate imaginary lands have contributed over £20,000 to charity. High-street game vendor **GAME** raised the sum by auctioning off life-sized Orc standees from **Warcraft III** to sinister weirdos, with proceeds donated to **The Entertainment Software Charity**. The cash will go towards youth charities throughout the UK, and chief executive officer of **GAME**, **John Steinbrecher**, bragged: "We're delighted to have been able to raise this money for charity and we'd like to see other companies in our industry follow with similar fundraising initiatives." The Orcs have yet to break their silence.

Finally, **Championship Manager: Season 01/02** has been given an ELSPA Platinum Award for sales of over 300,000, and is the only PC title to make the list, alongside the PS2's **Medal Of Honor: Frontline** and **Metal Gear Solid 2**. **Eidos** and **Sports Interactive** have shown their gratitude to the legions of loyal fans by announcing that **Season 02/03** will be an Xbox exclusive. However, **Championship Manager 4** is due out soon, although **Father Christmas** is believed to be unconcerned.

"High-street game vendor GAME raised over £20,000 by auctioning off life-sized Orc standees to sinister weirdos"

I'm Tiger Woods!

PC ZONE chips in with some new screenshots from **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003**



Tiger Woods may be a genius, but we beat the Americans in the Ryder Cup! Ha ha ha!

EA GAMES HAS been in the rough with its PC golf games in the past, mooching about quietly in the shade while Microsoft's Links series took all the silverware. However, the company is now extremely confident that the forthcoming **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003** will be significantly better than its nearest rival.

"We finally feel that we're in the position where the Microsoft series is having to chase us," evangelises executive producer David P De Martini. "**Tiger Woods 2003** is now in full 3D. We feel technologically in the lead, and they're having to move in our direction."

Players can choose from 14 PGA Tour golfers, such as Colin Montgomerie and Tiger himself, then take part in competitions on 12 courses that now include the famous St Andrews. The 'true swing'

method for taking shots by moving your mouse back and forth has been refined, and there's now dynamic TV-style camera shots that zoom around the action.

Another major revelation is the Career mode, that allows you to create your own player and build them up into a caddy hero through challenges, competitions and addictive mini-games. Electronic Arts is also using **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003** to launch the EA Sports Online portal, where you can sign up and challenge other Pringle sweater-wearing players around the world. We'll find out whether EA's latest golf sim flies like an eagle or drops like a bogey in November.

EA Games • ETA November •
www.eagames.com/eagames

Two-wheeler

Techland's **Speedway Grand Prix** puts something big and throbbing between your legs

IF YOU PREFER two-wheeled racing rather than the four-wheeled variety offered by games such as **TOCA Race Driver** (over the page), you might just appreciate the new title on its way from Polish developer Techland.

Built on the company's famed Chrome FPS engine, **Speedway Grand Prix** is a fully licensed



Speedway involves driving round and round until someone has a horrific crash. Cool.

3D racer featuring arenas and riders from around the world including Tomasz Gollob and Tony Rickardsson (what do you mean you've never heard of them?).

We've had a brief play of an early version of the game and it's coming along nicely, with features such as detailed bike models, solid rider animation and neat particle effects that spray up dirt and debris. Techland is aiming for a racer that will appeal to both hardcore speedway fans and casual arcade gamers, with various modes such as Time Trial, and tweakable driver aids. Or 'stabilisers for grown-ups' in everyday parlance.

Plans are also afoot for multiplayer games and online compatibility for leagues and knockout competitions. **Speedway Grand Prix** is currently without a publisher, but is scheduled for completion next year.

Techland • ETA 2003 • www.techland.com.pl/en

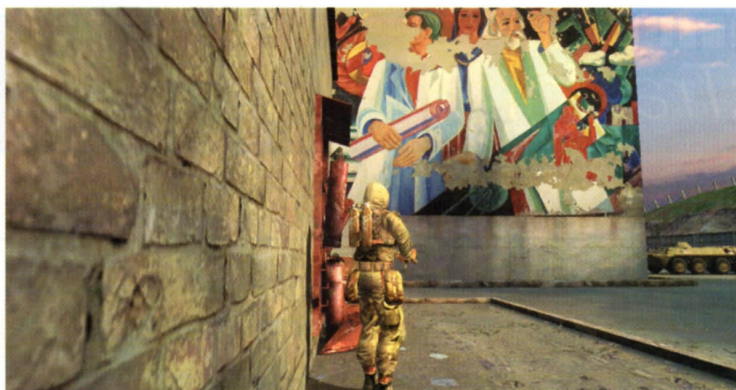
Nuclear-powered

Exclusive new screenshots from Chernobyl-based sci-fi FPS *Stalker: Oblivion Lost*

THEY'RE BUSY LITTLE bees over at the Ukrainian development house GSC Game World. The creator of *Cossacks* and *Codename: Outbreak* has given us new details on their futuristic racer *Hover Ace* (see page 18) and here, sneaked out exclusive screens on the extremely promising first-person shooter *Stalker: Oblivion Lost*.

The team has taken inspiration for the story of *Oblivion Lost* (working title) from the Chernobyl atomic power plant, which catastrophically exploded in 1986 spreading radiation over a massive area of Eastern Europe and the Ukraine. The reactor still lies dormant and deadly just 100km from GSC's offices in Kiev, and was visited a couple of times to ensure the area was accurately represented in the game.

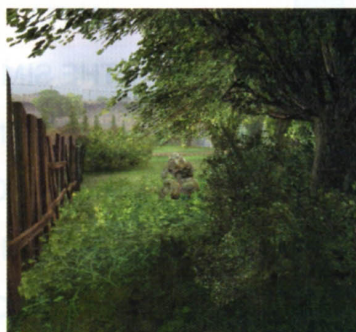
Oblivion Lost is set in 2006 after a second Chernobyl explosion which has created a deadly area full of all manner of nasties, including army soldiers, mutant rats, zombies and even psychopathic dwarves. As a mercenary or Stalker, you must enter 'the Zone' to kill enemies, avoid environmental anomalies such as poisonous fog and collect valuable artefacts. Another 100 NPC Stalkers will also be spread across the 15 non-linear levels that you can team up with on particularly risky missions, or ruthlessly dispose of to steal their valuables.



Why shouldn't you wear Ukrainian underpants? Chernobyl fallout.

Using a new proprietary game engine called X-Ray, *Stalker: Oblivion Lost* is also looking very nice indeed, even with more than a year to go in development. GSC reckons that a solid and smooth 60fps will be achievable on average PC hardware, with the top-of-the-range graphics cards producing character shadows, dynamic lighting and a skeleton-based animation system. We'll keep you posted on *Stalker: Oblivion Lost*'s progress before the game's launch in late 2003.

GSC Game World • ETA Q4 2003 • www.gsc-game.com



Check out the detail on this killer dwarf, sneaking towards you in the long grass.

Revved up

Codemasters' *TOCA Race Driver* on PC speeds towards the finish line



TOCA Race Driver on PC has 20 cars on track at once – six more than PS2.



Matching 'His 'n' Hers' MGs.

YOU PROBABLY HAVEN'T heard of Ryan McKane, but you will once you've played Codemasters' latest racing game, now confirmed for release on November 22. *TOCA Race Driver* is unusual because it centres on fictional hotheaded American McKane, whose career you follow through the game with cut-scenes and scripted events. You'll learn all about how Ryan watched his father die in a racing accident as a young boy, before eventually becoming a driver in his own right, desperate to come out of the shadow of his more skilled elder brother.

The circuit-based racer has already appeared on PlayStation 2, gathering excellent

reviews, but the PC version will have many enhancements, delivering what the Codies hope will be the definitive *TOCA* experience. The major improvement has been with the



Damage modelling is excellent.

number of cars rendered during races, which has increased from 14 to 20. *TOCA* has also maintained the series' excellent damage modelling, with bonnets flying up, windscreens breaking and doors ripped off.

As well as much better graphics, the PC version will also have advanced audio, with support for 5.1 surround sound so you'll hear every scrape of metalwork and squeal of tyres. We'll have a full review of *TOCA Race Driver* in the next issue of your friendly, neighbourhood ZONE.

Codemasters • ETA 22 November • www.codemasters.com/tocaracedriver

SHORTS

SPACE IS THE PLACE



Strategy First's real-time strategy game *ORB* – which stands for *Off World Resource Base* – is still on course for a November release. *ORB* centres on a desperate battle between two races for control of vital resources and promises eye-sizzling 3D graphics, a dynamic universe packed with planets, debris, asteroids and fleets of alien ships blasting chunks out of each other. There'll be options for up to eight players online, plus a downloadable editor for creating your own epic space adventures. For more information, head over to www.o-r-b.com.

PC KNIGHT-MARE?



Publisher Davilex has turned cult 1980s TV programme *Knight Rider* into a PC game. Yes, the vehicle (ahem) that launched David Hasselhoff to international superstardom and a dreadful pop career in Germany, is now a driving game where you take on evil adversaries in a high-tech talking car called KITT. As mullet-haired Michael Knight, you can use KITT to turbo boost, defy gravity and even ski in ten missions that will eventually lead you to a showdown with your arch nemesis Garth, KITT or SHIT? We'll hopefully have a review next month...

STAR WARES



This is one of the latest screenshots from LucasArts new *Star Wars* role-playing game *Knights of the Old Republic*. Developed by Baldur's Gate creator BioWare, the game is set a whopping 4,000 years before the *Star Wars* movies in a time when the original conflict between the Jedi (Hooray!) and the Sith (Boo!) was being fought. You can team up with other characters during the adventure to fight beasts such as the Rancor (above), and there'll also be dramatic starship battle sequences. *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* will be released next year – you can find out more at www.lucasarts.com/products/swkotor.

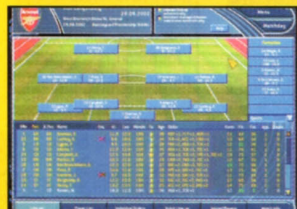
CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-stop guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it

ChartTrack

TOP 10



		TITLE	WEEKS IN CHART	SCORE
1	NEW	BATTLEFIELD 1942	1	78%
2	NEW	TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2003	1	77%
3	▼	MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR	5	90%
4	NEW	MAFIA	4	92%
5	▼	THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY	25	66%
6	NEW	THE THING	1	80%
7	▲	MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT	32	94%
8	▼	THE SIMS	137	86%
9	NEW	CONFLICT: DESERT STORM	2	73%
10	▼	THE SIMS: HOT DATE	44	71%

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

Battlefield 1942 at number one bodes well for server numbers, methinks. And hopefully *Mafia*'s success will herald the Age of the Well-Crafted Game™.

chosenJuan

The fact that *Mafia* is a well-crafted, thinking person's game means that its sales won't be as high as if it were an arcade shoot 'em up. People won't buy it because of its Mob themes and because people don't like hard games.

Dandy Flügge

The Sims is still in the charts. I'm starting to wonder if it's so popular because it's the only non-violent game on the market. You have to admit it's a crap game, so it must be something else that's attracting people to it.

Ne Plus Ultra

Nice to see *Medieval: Total War* in there. I got the demo off the *PC ZONE* disc and 30 minutes later I buggered off to *PC World* and bought it. It's one fine game.

bunngod



megastores

TOP 10

- MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR
- GRAND THEFT AUTO III
- BATTLEFIELD 1942
- STRONGHOLD: CRUSADER
- MAFIA
- MAX PAYNE
- PRISONER OF WAR
- THE THING
- TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2003
- WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS

COMPETITION



megastores

Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, *PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: What's the name of the Swedish development studio behind brilliant multiplayer shooter *Battlefield 1942*?

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ12A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5PZ. Closing date: November 13 2002

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*.

Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART-TRACK TOP 10

IT'S BEEN A rather special month for PC games with a whopping five new entries in the Chart-Track top ten. Straight in at number one is the excellent shooter *Battlefield 1942*, which is poor in single-player, but phenomenal in multiplayer – we'll have the definitive multiplayer review next month.

Total Club Manager is a surprising entry at number two and is obviously being bought by impatient footy fanatics who can't wait for the new *Championship Manager 2002/2003* update – now an Xbox exclusive by the way – or *Championship Manager 4*, both due next year.

Last month's number one, *Medieval: Total War*, slips to number three while crim sim *Mafia* shoots up the joint as a new entry at number four. Lurking in the shadows at number five is *The Thing*, an excellent atmospheric survival horror that follows on from the Carpenter film, while *Conflict: Desert Storm* has invaded the charts at number nine.

A shame to see *GTA III* drop out of the PC top ten so quickly – the game is still selling well on PS2 nearly a year after launch. Next month we reckon it's a dead cert that *UT2003* will be gracing the top spot, unless gamers lose their minds and plump for *Batman: Vengeance*. Yikes!

Jamie Sefton

MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...



Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided

ALTHOUGH THIS eagerly awaited MMORPG set in George Lucas's *Star Wars* universe is still due in the USA before Christmas, it appears that the Force isn't with the European version. Sources have indicated that Sony plans to unleash the game in the UK and Europe early next year, so those of you wanting to live life as a Wookiee on the planet Kashyyyk will have to put away your bowcasters for a few months longer. However it's bound to be worth the wait, and we'll bring you an extensive report on the US launch very soon.

Sony Online Entertainment • ETA Q2 2003 • www.sonyonline.com



Thief III

THE THIRD GAME in the *Thief* series is currently living up to its stealthy nature by refusing to show its face in public. Publisher Eidos has said no more information will be released on the game this year, as it's still quite a way off completion – late 2003 or early 2004 at the earliest. However, after conversations with Ion Storm's Warren Spector – currently busy on a certain other game called *Deus Ex 2: Invisible War* – *Thief III* should be very special indeed, promising real innovations in sneaky gameplay, graphics and *Havok*-based physics. We can't wait.

Ion Storm • ETA 2003 • www.thief3.com



Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter

IT'S ALL GONE quiet on the *Mace Griffin* front, with the elusive bounty hunter currently lost on a mission in the outer reaches of the PC universe. However, Warthog's mixture of first-person shooter and space combat could be a belter, promising a universe teeming with alien races and state-of-the-art graphics. The delay could be something to do with the fact that Warthog is also planning an Xbox version for release too, which usually puts a spanner in the development works. We're hoping to see Mace Griffin in action in the next few months, so of course we'll keep you bang up to date...

Warthog • Q2 2003 • www.ea.com/eagames

US TOP 10

- 1 BATTLEFIELD 1942
- 2 WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS
- 3 THE SIMS
- 4 THE SIMS: VACATION
- 5 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
- 6 MAFIA
- 7 MADDEN NFL 2003
- 8 THE SIMS: HOT DATE
- 9 MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR
- 10 GRAND THEFT AUTO III

INCOMING!

These are the big games that are going on sale in the next month or so. All dates are correct at the time of going to press, but we'd check ahead before running down to the shops in the driving rain.

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
No One Lives Forever 2	VU Games	October 18
Rollercoaster Tycoon 2	Infogrames	October 25
FIFA 2003	EA	November 1
Star Trek: Starfleet Command 3	Activision	November 15
Civilization III: Play The World	Infogrames	November 22
TOCA Race Driver	Codemasters	November 27
IGI 2 - Covert Strike	Codemasters	November 27
Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	November 29
007 Nightfire	EA	November 29
MoH: AA Spearhead	EA	November 29



WARRIOR KINGS - BATTLES

Battles so beautiful you'll just want to sit and watch your troops being slaughtered

WARRIOR KINGS WAS a revelation. Coming out of nowhere, it not only took the gaming world by storm, but it also took the RTS genre to new heights with its exquisite combination of a branching storyline and stunning 3D RTS action. However, much was made of its lack of skirmish options and somewhat bugged AI, two aspects that *Warrior Kings - Battles* is set to rectify.

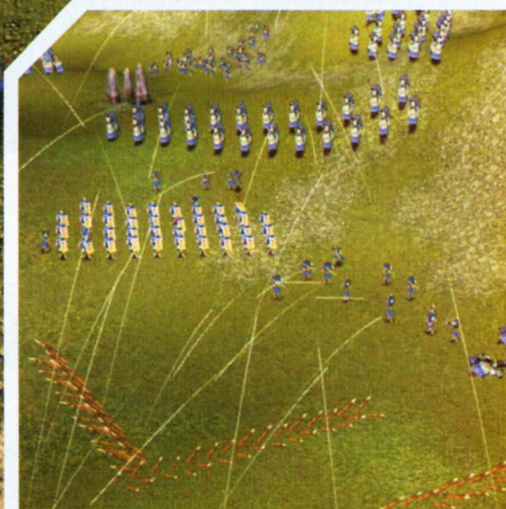
As you can see from these stunning shots, *Battles* will retain the beautiful visuals of its predecessor, while adding a dynamic free-form campaign for you to battle your way through. Several new units are being added to each of the three sides (Imperial, Pagan and Renaissance), including

elementals, which can be summoned from gold-deposits and trees. War elephants will provide a new offensive dimension with their devastating abilities to knock down castle gates, while insane witch doctors, although temperamental will be brimming to bursting point with devastating magic.

Those of you wanting to just battle it out in isolated battles will be able to take on one of the 50 unique AI generals over a multitude of maps, and if you don't like resource management the Valhalla mode will allow you to mass your troops on a field and engage your enemy's forces head on. Sounds great, looks stunning and if *Warrior Kings* was anything to go by, it'll play even better. **PCZ**

Empire Interactive • ETA February 2003 • www.blackcactus.com

HOTSHOTS







DIG IN

Make a stand and go into war with up to 64 players on-line.
Or go it alone and the advanced AI will give you a different experience everytime.
Choose from an arsenal of 20 deadly weapons and master 35 vehicles.
You'll need your wits about you in 16 key battles across four theatres.

— join the fight at —
www.battlefield1942.ea.com



UNDER THE INFLUENCE

With the recent killings in Germany linked to *Counter-Strike*, is censorship of games a good thing? Or should we be free to do and view what we want? **Paul Pettengale** investigates

HUNGERFORD, August 19 1987. Michael Ryan walks into the town centre of this little-known Wiltshire village and guns down 11 people, killing them dead. A few days later the *Daily Mail* reveals a possible motive: he played *Dungeons & Dragons*, apparently, and engaged in virtual violent acts (as well as a bit of devil worship) via Fantasy Play By Mail games. Mothers of middle-class kids throughout the country are horrified: this seemingly innocuous (if a bit strange) game their 14-year-old sons are playing could turn them into gun-toting mass murderers. Calls for D&D to be banned quickly follow.

Fast forward to 2002. It's a Friday morning in late April, and in the East German city of Erfurt all hell is about to break loose as Robert Steinhäuser walks into the classrooms of his former school, with a mask over his head and automatic weapons by his side, to kill 13 teachers and two pupils. The media has a huge reaction when it's revealed that Steinhäuser is a huge fan of PC games, and *Counter-Strike* – where terrorists take on counter-terrorists – in particular.

"Software for a massacre," proclaims the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* newspaper. "The killer was trained by a computer game."

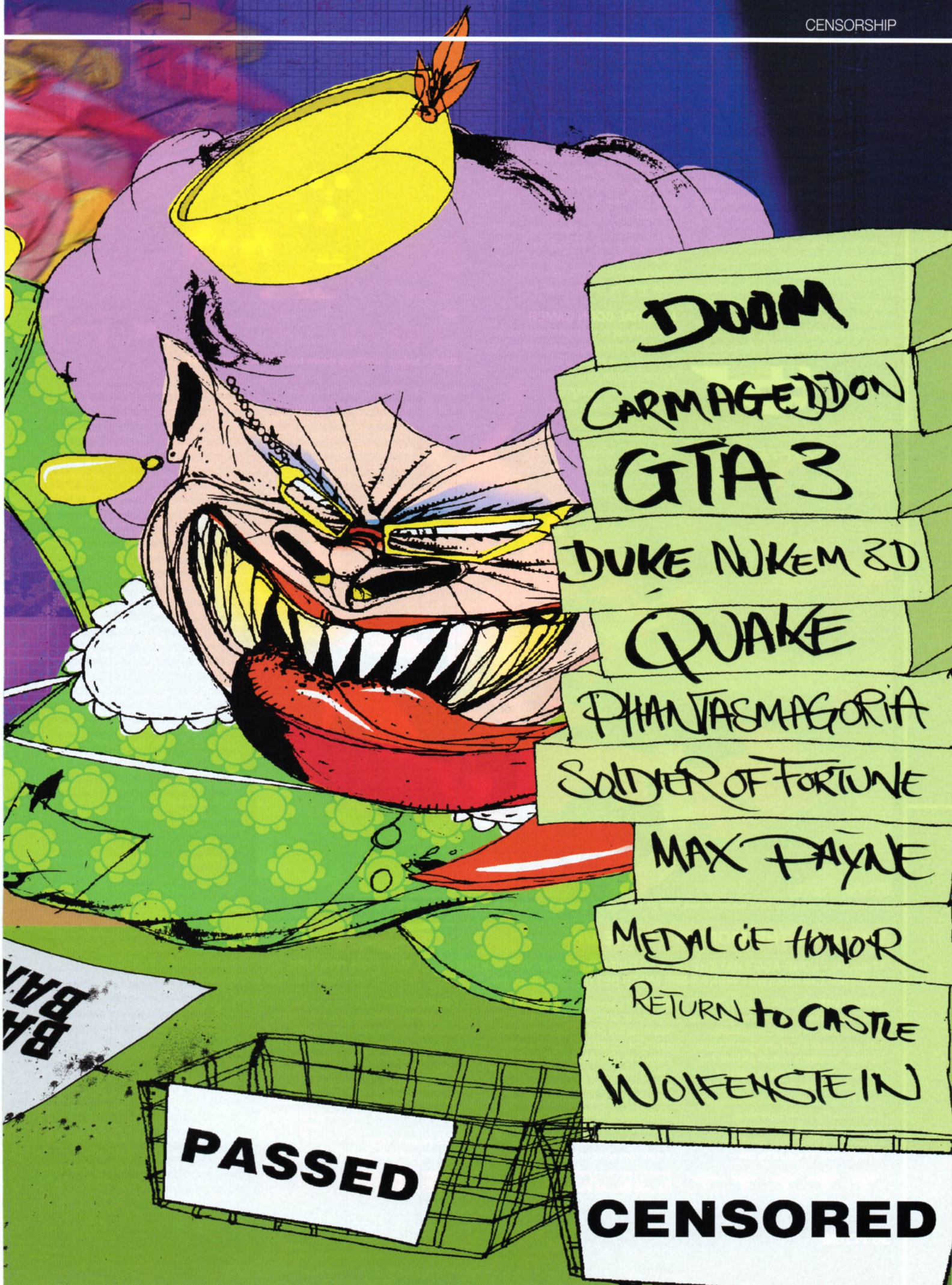
An outrageous claim, surely? The paper claims that Steinhäuser deliberately aimed at the head of his victims in the manner he'd learned as most effective during his sessions playing *Counter-Strike*, but surely someone that's never played a game in their life would know that you're not going to kill someone by shooting them in the foot. It's basic biology isn't it? But the paper claims that he supposedly learned this by interacting with the title and then employed that knowledge when committing his heinous crimes. However, the general theme here – that games can lead to violence, albeit in particular rare



"The killer was trained by a computer game"

A GERMAN NEWSPAPER
FOLLOWING SCHOOL MASSACRE IN ERFURT,
EAST GERMANY, APRIL 2002





DOOM

CARMAGEDDON

GTA 3

DUKE NUKEM 3D

QUAKE

PHANTASMAGORIA

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

MAX PAYNE

METAL GEAR SOLID

RETURN TO CASTLE

WOLFENSTEIN

PASSED

CENSORED

cases – does fuel the age-old censorship debate. Should games be banned, or at the very least, censored? Or should we have a stricter control system that ensures extreme content is only enjoyed by adults? Because surely, at the end of the day, games, like movies or novels, are just another medium to be enjoyed in the safe knowledge that they are not real, and that the harm seen within them does not affect everyday life?

But the real reason the tabloid media, and indeed, government objectors to videogames (of which there have been many), have such a problem with violence in games is that they're inextricably linked with kids and they're interactive. A movie, however engaging it may be, is a passive pastime: you flick the start button on your

DVD machine, you watch it, it ends. You may feel a bit stressed out at the imagery you've just witnessed, sure, but when it's over it's over, there's no harm done. PC games, and videogames in general, are rather different. You fire up *Counter-Strike*, or whatever, and you – you – are the one doing the killing. Or a virtual persona, at least – a character that acts in accordance with your will. It's this interactivity, objectors claim, that has a lasting effect on our psyches – an effect that can be as devastating as in the cases of Ryan (D&D is interactive too, remember) and, more recently, Steinhäuser.

NATURAL BORN GAMER

BT the answer to violence in videogames in the UK right now is pretty regimented. The whole issue kicked off back in the early 1990s, when 16-bit systems, notably Sega's MegaDrive, and computers including the Amiga and the PC were becoming powerful enough to produce graphically realistic (sort of) portrayals of death and destruction. *Doom*, launched in



Duke's babes didn't go down too well with the BBFC.

December 1993 was the first game (yes, *Wolfenstein* came before it, but its blocky graphics can hardly be described as realistic) that provided a first-person perspective of severe violence, and the government – thanks to the tabloids – started

getting twitchy. Acknowledging this, the software industry decided to self-regulate: all of the core developers and publishers signed up with ELSPA (the European Leisure Software Publishers' Association) and between them they invited the VSC (Video Standards Council) to implement a ratings system by which new releases could be categorised. Indeed, this system still exists, as you'll well know – the blue squares on the boxes of the games we buy and on the front of our cover discs tell us how old we should be to enjoy that particular game.

Self-regulation only worked so far though – it was fine for standard computer graphics, but with the introduction of Sega's MegaCD system in 1994, the censorship issue took a turn. The MegaCD was the first platform that employed full motion video – actual actors being videoed and then encoded in to act as cut-scenes and the like. Any video footage put out into the public domain has to be classified by the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification), so surely, thought the powers that be within the gaming world, any film with real video in it had to be classified also? And so games were indeed classified, though on a semi-self-regulatory basis. Any game that ELSPA and the VSC thought contained video that could be considered explicit (whether violent, sexual or in dubious taste) was passed onto the BBFC to be granted an official, and legally binding, certificate. And as the quality of computer graphics has improved – so that imagery generated by the computer can pretty realistically emulate video footage – the number of games submitted for official classification has increased to a point where virtually anything in the stores that contains violence (ie if it's been rated for ages 15 or higher by the VSC) has been vetted and certified by the BBFC.

ROAD RAGE

During the decade or so that classification has been taking place in the UK, there have been few surprises. Publish a game that features humans being killed in a graphical manner, especially if there's visible blood, and the chances are you're going to receive a 15 if not an 18 certificate. In 1994, though,



Carmageddon was the first game to fall foul of the BBFC; which is hard to believe looking at the graphics today.

SHOW ME THE MONEY! #1 THE UK

IT WASN'T LONG AGO THAT THE UK WAS GRIPPED BY THE VICE-LIKE HOLD OF MARY WHITEHOUSE AND HER CRONIES BUT THINGS ARE MUCH BETTER THESE DAYS...

VIDEOGAMES: The UK is among the most relaxed as far as games censorship is concerned, with just *Carmageddon* falling foul until it was changed to feature zombies instead of human pedestrians. Violence, nudity and the like all seem pretty acceptable, though the BBFC would stop games relating to societal taboos such as child molesting. International terrorism is another bugbear; anything to do with the events of September 11 would be cut.

MOVIES: Likewise, pretty well anything goes now, with most of the infamous video nasties of the '80s being given certification, although some are still subject to cuts. Snuff movies would still be a no-no, of course, and there was some hoo-hah over the release of *Crash* a couple of years ago (the movie based on JG Ballard's novel about people getting off on car smash scenes), but films aren't cut to the extent they used to be.

PORNOGRAPHY: You can now buy hardcore pornography under the 18R classification but you have to enter licensed sex shops should you wish to do so. There are limits however, and the BBFC still insists on cuts from stuff you'd probably be able to watch before the watershed in France. Again, participants have to be of legal age and, er, human.

PCZ Verdict: 12/15
Not bad, but room for improvement.



SHOW ME THE MONEY! #2 THE USA

THE US IS RENOWNED FOR BEING LIBERAL WITH A SMALL 'L'. FILM-MAKERS AND THE VIDEOGAMES INDUSTRY ARE, HOWEVER, GETTING INCREASINGLY TWITCHY ABOUT LITIGATION...

VIDEOGAMES: Most games are given the OK, although that's not surprising, as there is in fact no legal obligation for classification. Most developers do submit their games to the Entertainment Software Rating Board however, and most games containing violence cannot be bought by anyone under the age of 17 unless their parent is present and has given permission, though there are moves to try and get this ruling changed under the First Amendment rights.

FILMS: Thanks to that First Amendment just about any movie can be released in the States under the right of free speech, though there is the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) – the movie industry itself, effectively – which imposes classifications on films. These then act as guidelines for cinemas.

PORNOGRAPHY: Anyone who's seen *The People Versus Larry Flint* will know that the US legal system has battled with the issues of pornography for many a year, trying to curtail it with Obscenity Laws. The fact is though, you can still watch whatever you want, as long as it involves consenting adults, and the US porn industry, especially the amateur scene, is flying...

PCZ Verdict: 15/15
Have it!



"If you were to launch a game about abducting school-children and killing them, we doubt you'd get to market"

Daily Mail Campaign BAN THE SADIST VIDEOS

The Daily Mail. Don't you just hate them?

there was a shock, for the BBFC kicked back SCI's *Carmageddon* with a Refused classification. The game in which you scored points by mounting pavements to kill innocent pedestrians and using your car as a weapon, was turned down for release despite the fact that the violence in the game was pretty comical and not very realistic. Having said this you have to bear in mind that this was a time when joyriding was rife and real pedestrians were being killed by kids, and the BBFC thought the subject matter of the game was simply too offensive for publication. SCI took the refusal on the chin and re-submitted the game after making pretty extensive changes to the title – the pedestrians were replaced with zombies and this, said the BBFC, was absolutely fine for an 18 classification. Now, eight years on and you've probably played a similar game, with more realistic graphics, and the ability to get out of your car and clout old women

round the head with a baseball bat. *GTA III* anyone? Funny how times change.

TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING

And from this you can see that censorship is a very transient entity. Essentially what gets classified, and at what level, is based upon what's 'morally acceptable' – or not – by society at the time of classification. Think back to the '80s when a whole bunch of films were banned entirely on account of being 'video nasties' (in fact it was 1984 when the 'video nasties' bill came into force, though films such as *The Exorcist* had long since been banned for release on video). There was fear at the time that child-related crime – especially violent crime – was related to the videos that any kid could supposedly walk into their video stores and rent. *The Daily Mail* launched its 'Ban the sadist videos' campaign in 1983 against the likes of *The Evil Dead* – a film that was eventually banned. But as all horror genre fans will know, *The Evil Dead* was reclassified and released – in its uncut version – in 2001, along with a host of previously banned films. Society has moved on and accepted that the scene where the tree comes alive in the aforementioned film was actually fairly ludicrous, and refined its judgement.

If you were to launch a game about abducting school-children and killing them right now, we doubt you'd get to market. Likewise, it's no great surprise that the PlayStation beat 'em up *Thrill Kill* was banned (and subsequently dropped by EA) because it featured a

dominatrix character screaming orgasmically as she defeated her opponents. As far as society is concerned now, such things just ain't on. Imagine – a year on from 9/11 – announcing your intention to release a game where the player acted out the role of a terrorist

engaging in Stateside activities. The papers would have a field day.

PEEPING TOM

It's two recurrent themes that the censors take issue with: sex and violence. The former is pretty rare in videogames as

DOOMED

IT WAS THE FIRST 3D SHOOTER AND IT CHANGED THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT. NO WONDER DOOM IS STILL IN THE NEWS...



Doom is a landmark game in more ways than one.

Despite being almost a decade old, *Doom*'s been back in the news (in the United States, at least). It was one of four games (the others being *Fear Effect*, *Mortal Kombat* and *Resident Evil*) that were 'tested' by US District Judge Stephen N Limbaugh during a recent case.

The Interactive Digital Software Association had attempted to get a local law (which stipulates that under 17s can't buy violent games without parental consent) overturned. The grounds for this action was that games represented speech, and should therefore be protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Judge Limbaugh, however, found the following: "[There is] no conveyance of ideas, expression, or anything else that could possibly amount to speech. The court finds that videogames have more in common with board games and sports than they do with motion pictures".

This is pretty important stuff, as far as the US courts go, because it opens the door for further regulation with much in the way of Constitutional comeback. Until, of course, a higher court overturns the ruling.

Doom was also one of the games 'blamed' for the killings at the Columbine school, where 13 kids and staff were gunned down and killed by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold in 1999. The parents of the dead subsequently attempted to sue companies within the games industry for \$5 billion in compensation. A representative for the families stated: "Without the combination of the violent videogames and these boys' incredibly deep involvement, use of and addiction to these games, and the boys' basic personalities, these murders and this massacre would not have occurred." The case was dismissed in March of this year, though there may yet be an appeal.



"It's violence rather than sexual content that stirs up the newspapers"

Are games such as *Wolfenstein* showing us that violence is OK?

you'll know if you read our feature in issue 119, (although this is more down to developers understanding what will get through and what won't get through the censors in this country). There are no instances where games have been banned in the UK (though look to Australia and it's a rather different matter) on the grounds of sexual content. *Duke Nukem 3D* received an 18 classification in 1996 in part due to the scantily clad hookers in red light district locations. It also featured women that had been bound to use as mates or food by the alien race that had

taken over Earth. In truth though, it was pretty tame stuff.

I LIKE TO WATCH

Rather more disturbing was the previously released *Voyeur*. Launched in 1994 by Interplay, this game was largely made up of real video sequences that you 'recorded' with a video camera. Based in the house of a Presidential candidate there were a number of sexually risqué elements, and one sequence where a woman accuses a man of molesting her as a child. It received an 18 certificate



Not in Germany you don't.



Voyeur was one of the first games to benefit from FMV and risky sexual content. Predictably, the game was knob.



here in the UK though other censors took a harder line – it was banned in Australia, for instance, though in that case the ban was enforced on the grounds that the game contained sexually explicit language.

Similarly, *Phantasmagoria* was released in the UK though banned in Australia due to the inclusion of a rape scene (though this was non-interactive and merely viewed). The game was one of the many 'interactive movies' appearing at the time (it was released a year later, in 1995) when companies were exploiting the relatively new capabilities of CD-ROM. The plot, which involved a woman in a haunted house complete with a demonically possessed husband, was fairly clichéd, though the title sold extremely well both here and in the States.

It's violence rather than sexual content that stirs up the newspapers though – there's a more tangible link to violent crime being committed as a direct result, so the tabloids claim, of playing a videogame on a console or PC.

Numerous games enjoyed on the PC contain extreme graphical violence, often placing the player in the role of dishing out the beatings, or worse... *Doom*, of course, was the first one, and there was a pretty extreme reaction at the time.

SHOW ME THE MONEY! #3 GERMANY

THANKS TO ITS RECENT HISTORY THE GERMAN STATE IS MORE DICTATORIAL THAN MOST. GRAPHIC VIOLENCE IN VIDEOGAMES AND NAZI IMAGERY ARE BOTH BANNED

VIDEOGAMES: To be frank, you're going to have trouble getting a game published in Germany if it contains graphic violence towards human beings. *Doom*? Nope. *Quake*? Nope. *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*? Forget about it – anything involving racism or Nazi imagery is banned. And that's the end of that.

MOVIES: Likewise, racist or neo-Nazi imagery can't appear in films, so forget about the Saturday afternoon war movie on TV. Violence is also out, with horror films slashed for release. Perhaps this is why no one can think of a decent German film apart from *Tin Drum*.

PORNOGRAPHY: The Germans are actually pretty lax on porn, as long as it doesn't star kids. There's even a pornography museum in the heart of Berlin, a city renowned for its 'cubicle clubs' and fetish shops.

PCZ Verdict: 7/15
Don't mention the war





You can see from these screenshots how realistic graphics have become over the years. Are the censors going to return?

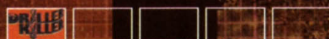
SHOW ME THE MONEY! #4 AUSTRALIA

THE AUSTRALIANS ARE A REMARKABLY PRUDISH BUNCH, WITH SEX AND THE DEGRADATION OF WOMEN BEING THINGS THAT THE CENSORS ARE PARTICULARLY HOT ON

VIDEOGAMES: A whole bunch of videogames have been banned in Australia where they have been given classifications for release elsewhere – *Duke Nukem 3D* for instance, because of the hookers and the bound women. Others include *Dream Web*, *Harvester*, *Phantasmagoria* and, er, *Strip Poker*. All were banned for sexual content rather than anything directly relating to violence.



MOVIES: They don't seem to like their horror movies over in Australia – they're basically stuck where the UK was in the mid-'80s, banning anything that's too grim and gruesome. Bizarrely, a few films have been banned, re-classified and then re-banned. These include the exquisitely named *I Spit on Your Grave*, and Pier Paolo Pasolini's torture-packed allegory, *Salò*.



PORNOGRAPHY: Again, Australia is pretty tough on porn, as well as movies and videogames. Pornography is considered 'dangerous to women' and therefore a hard line is taken against it. If you want good, honest, clean-living fun, you know where to head.

PCZ Verdict: 3/15
Strewth mate that's harsh...



In the nine years since, 3D shooters have come to dominate the PC games market with a string of titles released, each one trying to outdo the previous in terms of the strength of the violence within. *Quake*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Unreal*, *Quake II* and *III*, *Counter-Strike*, *Soldier Of Fortune*, *Max Payne*, *Medal Of Honor* and – in the very same month – *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. All of them can lay claim to being violent in the extreme. *RTCW* is, perhaps, the most extreme, in terms of subject matter at least, and although it was banned in Germany because it contains Nazi imagery (all Nazi imagery is illegal over there), it received a 15 certificate in the UK.

When *Medal Of Honor* was released, it too was given a 15 certificate – the same as the 15 certificate that the *Saving Private Ryan* movie (which features pretty similar content) received upon its release. The game deliberately stayed away from graphic gore, leaving the initial release bloodless, and although still fairly harrowing it proves that the BBFC today is far more relaxed than its predecessors. In fact, if you really want an 18 certificate in a bid to drive sales then you've got to go really over the top, down the *Soldier Of Fortune* road. We don't think anyone would argue with this

being available to adults only: being able to focus right up close on your intended victim to watch as you blow a limb from his body isn't exactly family viewing and some might say, extremely unnecessary and morally dubious. And that's without its link to the right-wing gun magazine of the same name.

TOMORROW'S WORLD

But, despite the relative calm of today, the whole censorship issue could raise its head again anytime soon. The next batch of video cards and the release of DirectX 9 promises to take PC games into cinematic levels of quality. The first title to really show this off is also, ironically, the most graphically violent game we've seen. *Doom 3* sets itself out to be the most disturbing game to date, in terms of graphics, theme and even the sound, which is being put together by Trent Reznor. The CEO of id fully expects *Doom 3* to stir up some controversy, but would he ever remove elements from the game for fear of

falling foul of the censors? When we talked to Todd Hollenshead he was pretty bullish about the content, and was keen to point out that id Software makes games with adult content to be enjoyed by adults in the privacy of their own home.

RESPONSIBILITY

It's impossible and wrong, even in a 'free' society, to imagine that you can get away without banning or threatening to ban anything. If something that we play for fun contains material that's morally reprehensible to the society at large – paedophilia, for instance – then shouldn't we tow the societal line and ban games that feature such content?

For everything else there should be strict age controls. The present dual system of certification seems confusing to us, despite these words from ELSPA-head Roger Bennet. "Less than five percent of games are rated by the BBFC, so there shouldn't be any confusion in the shops. Games are exempt from legal classification unless they contain scenes which involve gross violence towards people or humans, or scenes of drug-taking and the like."

This is likely to change next year with the introduction of a pan-European rating system (without Germany thankfully, who are likely to strike out on their own), at which point ELSPA ratings are likely to disappear. A single system of certification seems to make much more sense to us, after all it's only when 'adult' games get in the hands of kids that tabloids get themselves all worked up and the government feels like it has to employ strong-arm tactics.

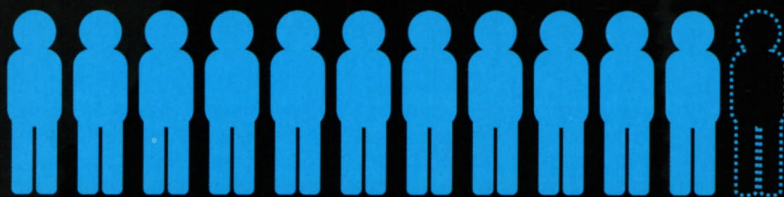
Ever since 1984 every video has had to be classified by the BBFC and this has led to relaxing on materials available to adults. Stricter controls on age restrictions would ensure that we effectively self-censor, leaving adults to enjoy adult content without being branded perverts or maniacs – and a single system of age rating would at least enable parents to make informed choices. Can parents be trusted? That's another question. **PCZ**



CONTROL THE BALL AND YOU CONTROL THE GAME

FIFA FOOTBALL 2003 has an all-new AI engine.
It fundamentally changes the way you play the game.
The ball behaves like a ball. Better get back in training.

Get on the pitch. Get in control. Be the 12th.



fifa2003.ea.com



THE 2003 FREEKICK MODEL

Dead ball doesn't mean dead game. The new set-piece dynamic gives you complete control. You can shoot and dip your effort under the bar, drive it at pace through your own players in the wall or hit it like Roberto C: ridiculous swerve laced with a touch of malice.



THE 2003 FREESTYLE CONTROL MODEL

EA SPORTS™ Freestyle Control is a brand new ball control mode. Freestyle Control gives you individual moves for individual players. The kind of move to embarrass a defender. The kind of move to make him bring you down on the edge of the box. Over to you, Roberto.



PlayStation 2



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THE 2003 PASSING MODEL

New team play and team tactics. Breaking down the opposition needs more precision passing and movement. See Edgar Davids for details.



THE 2003 BALL PHYSICS MODEL

Dodgy headers, wild slices, overhit passes – you can do them all if you're not skilful enough. New ball physics mean the ball won't do all the work for you. The ball will react like the ball that Davids wins, the ball that Giggs flicks and the ball that Roberto Carlos punctures walls with. This should sort out the men from the youth team.



THE 2003 DRIBBLING MODEL

Inverse Kinematics taken to the next level. The ball doesn't stick to you, you have to stick to the ball. Ryan Giggs can do this. Can you do this?



Official FIFA Licensed Product.
© 1977 FIFA™



It's in the game



"Ooh, this doesn't half give my fingers gyp, I'll tell you that much."



"Right, take me to a cashpoint and withdraw the lot. And don't give me no bother, got it?"



Killing me softly...

SPLINTER CELL

Cloaked in shadow, **Anthony Holden** tiptoes his way to Ubi Soft and steals a hands-on with the most-wanted game of Christmas 2002

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft Montreal
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
WEBSITE www.splintercell.com
OUT November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It looks absolutely magnificent
- It's stealth-action but with an edge of Tom Clancy realism
- Loads of cool gadgets to play with
- All manner of handy athletic moves
- One of the nicest lighting systems ever seen in a game
- Hugely interactive environment

CV

Ubi Soft
 ENTERTAINMENT

UBI SOFT MONTREAL

Montreal is home to Ubi Soft's biggest development studio...

1986 Ubi Soft begins its life as a small French games publisher, formed by the brothers Guillemot.

1996 As part of Ubi Soft's plans for global domination, a new studio is formed in Montreal, Canada. The early years of the studio are spent making *Tarzan* games and other kids' fodder.

2001 Montreal becomes the home of a new breed of Tom Clancy games. The team cuts its teeth on *Rogue Spear: Black Thorn*, then gets stuck straight into *Splinter Cell* and *Raven Shield*.

STEALTH-ACTION. It's a strange concept you must admit. Here you are, this elite undercover operative, invincible stealth assassin or whatever, conducting a mission of the utmost danger, and yet you spend your whole time sneaking around out of sight, hiding, waiting for an opening, and generally doing... nothing. All those years of training in weapons, languages, martial arts, espionage, and here you are just hanging around in the shadows like some sort of froth-lipped, fidgeting pervert trying to steal a glimpse of pink flesh through your neighbour's lace curtains. Waiting... watching... scratching... getting cramp.


And yet, strangely enough, pretending to do next to nothing is some of the best fun you've ever had in front of a computer screen. The atmosphere is palpably

intense, the fear of discovery overwhelming; the sense of mastery felt as an enemy wanders past you, completely oblivious to your presence: impossibly satisfying. Thus is the power of invisibility.

And eventually, of course, the moment strikes. The moment when all your training comes to bear, when you spring into action and... chop, snap, gurgle, miaow, another victim falls prey to your special brand of silent death.

It's not about just overcoming your opponent; it's about doing it silently, undetected, unseen. Doing it with style. And this is what Ubi Soft's imminent stealth-action blockbuster *Splinter Cell* is all about. Maximising your options – maximising the number of different, cool ways you can eliminate your foes. Or disable them. Or avoid them.



A full-page photograph of Sam Fisher from the video game Splinter Cell. He is wearing his signature black tactical suit, a head-mounted display with four glowing green lenses, and a large black backpack. He is holding a silenced pistol with both hands, aiming it towards the left. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong green light source from the bottom left creating a grid-like pattern on the floor and casting a long shadow of Fisher onto the wall behind him. The overall atmosphere is stealthy and tactical.

"Splinter Cell is all about maximising the number of different, cool ways you can eliminate your foes"



The sniper scope. What stealth shooter would be complete without one.



"Argh. If only I had a cardboard box to hide myself in..."

As Grégoire Gobbi, producer on *Splinter Cell*, explains: "We've designed the game so that in 90 per cent of cases you can choose exactly how to handle things. We build the world, we simulate some rules that are simple and easy to understand, we give you some tools, and then you do whatever you want to reach your objective."

TO KILL WITH INTRIGUE

It's this kind of freedom, coupled with the fact that the game looks absolutely gorgeous, that's caused actual ripples of excitement whenever *Splinter Cell* has appeared in public. Best Action/Adventure Game at E3, Overall Best Game of Show at ECTS – hell, we've been raving about it ourselves since it was unveiled in Montreal earlier this year. This time, however, we've played it, or at least a couple of levels of it, and have tasted some of that freedom first-hand.

Of course when we say you can 'do whatever you want', it doesn't quite mean that hero Sam Fisher can spy on enemies with the old 'eyeholes in the newspaper' trick, or overcome enemies with a swift Vinnie Jones-style plum squeeze. There's no doubt though that he's a resourceful chap with more than a few tricks up his sleeve.

Grégoire is eager to stress this as we approach the first door in our first level of the game. "Before entering a room, you can do several things. You can shoot out



"10... Print "Sam Fisher is cool"... 20 Goto 10. Run."

the lights outside so you can't be seen in the doorway. You can also use your snake cam, to give a sneak preview of what's going on in the next room." Obliging, I select the optical cable camera from my inventory and use it to peek under the door. A grainy fish-eye view of the next room appears: inside, a guard stands restlessly between cells of prisoners, his back to the door.

Grégoire continues: "Once you get inside you can do many things. You can just look, trying to understand the pattern of the guards' movements so that you can sneak through the area. You can shoot out all the lights with your silenced weapon, which will make a noise that the guard will investigate, but it will make things easier for you if you get away with it. Or you can just shoot the guards with your sniper scope, regulating your breath to get a steadier target." At this point, the reticule hovering over the guard's unwary form



Remember kids, this is what happens when you listen to heavy metal music."

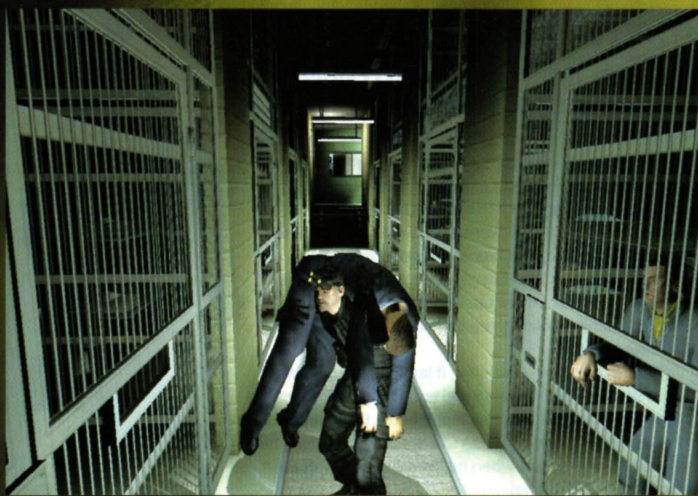
"We build the world, we give you some tools, and then you do whatever you want to reach your objective"

GRÉGOIRE GOBBI
PRODUCER, *SPLINTER CELL*

gets the better of me, and I unload half a clip into his back. I receive a disapproving glance, but it seems to do the trick.

GRITTY REALISM

Anyone familiar with the exploits of Solid Snake will recognise the aim-steadying feature mentioned here as an idea cribbed from *Metal Gear Solid*. But whereas in that game you popped a nice calming Diazepam to aid your sniping, Sam Fisher simply holds his breath. Not as cool perhaps, but certainly more believable. This is a Tom Clancy game after all, and hence set in a rigorously almost-real, day-after-tomorrow universe. All the gadgets, weapons, technology –

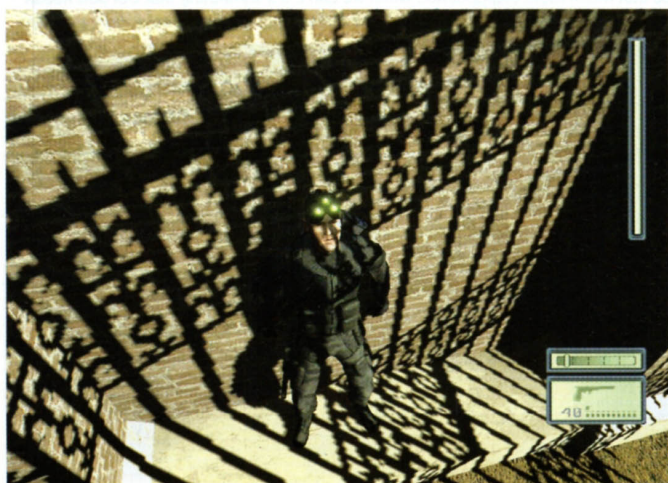


Mmm, soft bodies. (No you perv, I mean the technology used in the plastic...)

LIGHT AND MAGIC

SPLINTER CELL'S LIGHTING SYSTEM DOESN'T JUST LOOK PRETTY – IT'S CENTRAL TO THE GAMEPLAY

Gone are the days of vision cones, arbitrary dark zones and myopic guards – *Splinter Cell's* lighting system makes hiding in the shadows about as real as it gets. "The global lighting system is our main technical wow factor in the game," enthuses Grégoire Gobbi. "It's one of the main features we're adding to the genre. With one single source of light we can illuminate a whole scene, and everything casts a shadow on everything. The light shines through the fence and casts a shadow on Sam, who casts a shadow on himself. This gives a very realistic look to the game, and it's also consistent with the kind of gameplay we have in the game, because it's all about playing with light."



"I'm invisible, no one can see me, I'm like a beautiful chameleon."

even the political situation that frames the plot – either exist today or very easily could within the next five years. (In fact, most of the gadgets can be bought at Spymaster.com if you're sufficiently cashed up – and unnaturally paranoid.) Whether or not this realism is a good thing or not is probably a matter of taste.

In any case, Grégoire quickly regains his train of thought. "You could also have shocked him with your sticky shocker, putting him out of commission for a couple of hours. Or waited until he wandered away, used your split-jump thing to straddle the corridor and shoot out one of the lights so that he came to investigate. Then once he walked underneath you, you would just have needed to drop down on his head and knock him out." Maybe next time, eh?

By this stage it's becoming clear that there are three main ways to tackle any given situation. You can be stealthy, remaining in the safety of the shadows at all times and avoiding confrontation. Your light meter tells you how visible you are, and if no shadow exists, you simply create one by knocking out the lights when no one's looking. You can use your gadgetry, such as your sticky shocker and snake cam, overcoming enemies with your superior equipment budget. Or you can use your athletic moves – dive rolling, split-jumping, abseiling and pole-climbing your way past any given threat. Usually, of course, it's a combination of all three.

YOU'RE SACKED

In fact, the only thing you can't do is go in all guns blazing. I tried this a couple of times, and apart from being swamped with guards every time and running out of ammo, I also failed the mission simply by virtue of breaking my orders to keep a low profile. This seemed like a bit of a cheap way to enforce stealthy behaviour, as the game should make you want to stay hidden for fear of your life rather than your boss, but we're assured this will be properly balanced by release day.

"All the NPCs have an alert state signifying their state of vigilance," explains Grégoire. "Every time a security breach is detected, the alert state in the whole level will go up a notch – permanently, making progress that much harder." Security breaches don't just mean getting spotted by a surveillance camera either – all dead bodies must be extremely well hidden if they are not to be found and reported.

Getting back to the mission at hand, we soon find ourselves at the next threat – a geek in a laboratory with a keyboard round his neck. This time, on Grégoire's advice, I spare his life. "If you sneak up behind him and use the action key, you'll get him in a submission hold." Once again I oblige, and Sam grabs the lard-ass round the neck and puts a gun to his head. "Now you can either interrogate him, use him as a human shield or discard him." I decide to do all three, in turn, pausing to admire the excellent quality of the voice-acting in the ensuing exchange.

Soon enough the tubby egghead is lying on the ground, unconscious.

Q&A

MATHIEU FERLAND



Jumping out of the shadows, we lock on a submission hold and submit Mathieu Ferland, senior producer on *Splinter Cell*, to a gruelling interrogation

PCZ What's the most important innovation *Splinter Cell* is bringing to the genre?

MF A stealth game is all about lighting and shadow, about sneaking from a safe zone to another safe zone. One of the main innovations with *Splinter Cell* is that, by destroying lights, the player can create new safe zones and make his own path through the game. The night vision becomes a great tool because, even in complete dark, you're still powerful. Other gadgets, like the sticky camera, allow the player to gain information about an area without taking the risk of being seen.

PCZ Can you describe some of your favourite moments from the game?

MF I really like the final level. It takes place in a presidential palace that's very well protected. All the gadgets are available at this point and the layout of the level is excellent. The music is great and the challenges are hot! I also like the oil refinery level because the mission area is wide open, and the style of play is different from all the other levels.

PCZ What benefits do you think you've gained from having the Tom Clancy licence? Has its emphasis on realism restricted you in any way?

MF The Clancy franchise is definitely a great source of inspiration. The Clancy style is well known and well defined; so are the guidelines for using it. However, when we thought about a gadget for the game, it needed to serve the gameplay before anything else. Some of the gadgets, like the sticky cam, have been adapted and are a bit ahead of their time. So somehow, we used Clancy's realistic touch to serve the gameplay.

PCZ How long do you think *Splinter Cell* will take to play through?

MF We expect the game to be played within 15 hours for very good players and within 30 hours for players who haven't played stealth games before. In terms of replay value, we didn't spend too much time on hidden areas or new features to discover. The gameplay offers different ways of achieving the same challenge and we suspect the player will play again and again to try new strategies.

PCZ What aspect of the game is the team most proud of?

MF The lighting system and the interactive environment, which are quite innovative.





Another night on the tiles. (Sorry.)

Another mission objective appears on my interface, but by then I am enjoying the spray of glass and shrapnel as I shoot every breakable item in the room, laughing maniacally as I go. Grégoire looks on, frowning.

GO ON BOSS

So far I've eliminated only two foes, but if you're talking stealth and style, it doesn't come much better than this.

Stuffy academic types are always quick to tell us that videogames are about exercising power. Well, if shooting a bunch of witless, scuttling Nazis in the head with a machine gun gives you a kick, how much more satisfying is it going to be to lure your opponent into a shadowy trap, put him in a submission hold and pump him for information, only to pistol-whip him and dump his lifeless body in the nearest stairwell? It's going to be brilliant, of course. (Unfortunately, the logical extension of this argument is the endorsement of some sort of dodgy S&M slave sim, replete with nipple clamps and gimp hoods, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.)

In the meantime, I'm getting impatient, and I push Grégoire about some other aspects of the game. What about the ends of levels – are there bosses to contend with? “No we don't have boss characters,” clarifies Grégoire. “To pace



“Hell with this. It smells funny down there, I'm off home.”

the game, we have special sequences, using special gadgetry such as a laser mic that you have to use to intercept a conversation. The gameplay involves keeping a target centred on the windows of a moving car, or a lift. In another one, you have to enter a locked security door. To do this, you fire a sticky camera onto a wall near the door, then hide while a guard comes and taps in the code. You have to switch to heat vision in order to see what keys he touched, by watching the residual heat signature on the buttons, to retrieve the combination and open the door.” Well, that certainly shut me up. Bosses seem like a silly idea now.

OVER BY CHRISTMAS

I could go on and on about all sorts of other cool aspects of *Splinter Cell*, even though I only played through a handful of levels before outstaying my welcome. And I haven't even mentioned the plot yet (terrorist cells, information warfare, yadda yadda). However, the game is just weeks away from completion, and chances are I'll be reviewing it for you next issue, so I'd better not shoot my load prematurely. Needless to say, it's looking superb, and it'll be a calamity if it proves to be anything less than the landmark of stealth gaming it appears to be.

For this reason, we've made sure that we'll be the first ones to see it and review it when it's finished and we'll be bringing you the world exclusive review very soon. What's more, *PC ZONE* readers will be the first ones to play it (well, apart from us) when the exclusive playable demo arrives on our cover discs. Why? Because we care. **PCZ**

IT SLICES, IT DICES!

...IT EVEN JULIENNES! IT'S SAM FISHER'S AFFORDABLE ALL-PURPOSE GUN, THE F2000!

Sam's firearm of choice is the F2000 modular weapon system, a handy piece of kit seemingly designed with the Swiss Army foremost in mind. It fires bullets of course, either singly or in full auto (though you'll soon run out of ammo if you over-use the automatic option). It has a sniper scope. It launches grenades. It has a sticky shocker device that gives enemies an electric shock and renders them unconscious. It has a ring airfoil launcher, which gives an enemy a non-lethal knockout punch.

Plus, in a limited-time offer, it launches two different kinds of cameras that can send images back to Sam – in three vision modes (normal, night, heat). One camera even makes a little whistling noise to attract a guard, and then releases sleeping gas when he draws near. No kitchen should be without one.



“Dead bodies must be extremely well hidden if they're not to be found and reported”



“Now how the hell do I get down from here...?”

OBJECT LESSON

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS 'FULLY INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENT' THEN?

One of the small revolutions going on in games at the moment is the addition of 'advanced real-world physics', which calculates the movement and interaction of objects and characters in real time (such as a bullet and a crate, or a corpse and a flight of stairs). It's set to become standard issue in shooters over the next couple of years, but at the moment it's all a bit new and exciting. *Unreal*-powered games such as *Devastation* (which we'll be previewing next issue) and *UT 2003* (see page 72) are amongst the first to show it off, but *Splinter Cell* has a heavily modified *Unreal*-based system of its own. We're not talking rag-doll deaths here – that feature is not in *Splinter Cell* – but we are talking advanced object interaction. So, if you see a can on the ground and you're clever, you'll pick it up and throw it to distract a guard. If you're not so clever, you'll kick it over and alert the same guard to your presence. You can also shoot out lights, knock boxes off shelves, blow up computers, that sort of thing.

Of course not every item in the game can be thrown or destroyed, and there is a risk that once we get used to interacting with the environment at such a high level we'll be that much more disappointed when we can't. It's something that Ubi Soft needs to manage carefully, but if done right, the rewards for gameplay could be immense.



It may look like garbage, but in the right hands it becomes a deadly ally...

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PlayStation 2



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Phantom menace... **BREED**

All the waiting and hoping has paid off – *Breed* is shaping up to be the most distinctive and ambitious shooter in years. Anthony Holden goes into orbit

LET'S FACE IT, PC gamers are not known for being the most formidable of foes when it comes to a ruck. If you had to put money on an angry post-pub set-to between a clan of hardcore online fraggers and your average women's hockey team, you'd really have to go for the short-haired lot with the sensible footwear.

It's a heavy burden to have to carry through life, that's for sure. And

if you think about it, it's probably the reason PC gamers are such a bitter, subversive lot when they get together online. Software piracy, illegal file-sharing networks, anti-corporate hacking – it all clearly stems from a deeply ingrained underdog mentality.

It's not necessarily a bad thing of course, but it does mean that PC gamers love to see the little guy triumph once in a while. Bill Gates gets a pie in the face – brilliant. KaZaA picks up where Napster

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Brat Designs
PUBLISHER CDV
WEBSITE www.breedgame.com
OUT Q1 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

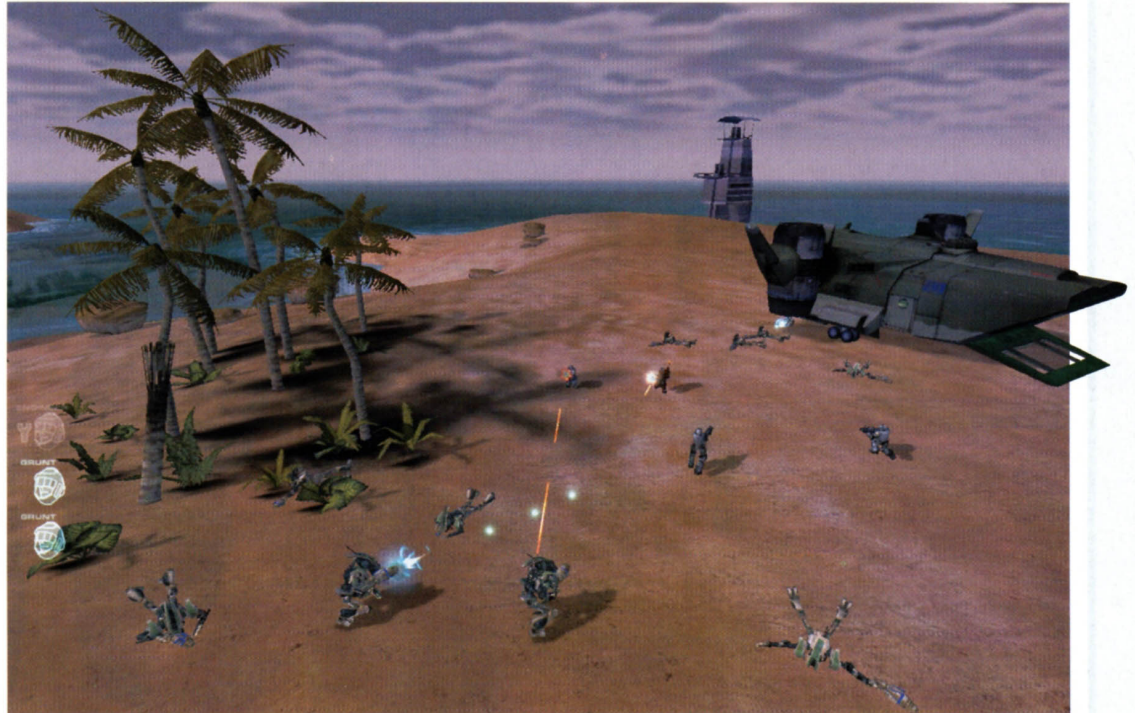
- Unique action/strategy gameplay
- Massive environments
- Huge range of vehicles to command
- Massively varied gameplay ranging from space combat to squad-based shooting
- Seamless transitions from orbit to Earth
- Looks absolutely magnificent

left off, leaving the RIAA powerless? Love it. The dotcom bubble bursts and bankrupts hundreds of smug teenage millionaires? Oh, shame (snigger).

AND YOUR POINT IS?

The point is, if any of this nonsense is even vaguely true, you're going to love UK developer Brat Designs and its debut title, *Breed*. If ever there was a David and Goliath tale on the brink of being told in the games industry, it's this one. Here's the story so far...

In mid 2000, Brat Designs is formed by veteran coder Ed Scio and artist Jason Gee. Between them they boast more than 30 years experience in the biz. Their vision: to create a world-class game based on clever in-house technology, using minimal resources and a stripped down development team. Their secret: Mercury, a proprietary engine designed from the outset to be hugely flexible and fully scripted (ie all game values can be viewed and altered via a spreadsheet, hence requiring no coding knowledge to add or alter game elements), effectively putting the power of development back in the hands of the designers. Using the Mercury engine, Brat intends to show the world what a small, focused development team is capable of. Its first game, *Breed*, is a stunning sci-fi shooter, combining elements of



No corridor based action here – *Breed* is all about the great outdoors.

squad-based strategy, space combat and vehicular action.

The thing is, the game's almost finished (we've played it), and all of a sudden it looks like they've gone and pulled it off. It's not quite there yet, but it looks very much like somehow, a handful of modestly-funded UK developers have made a game that's going to put the big studios to absolute shame.

CHALK ONE FOR THE LITTLE GUY

But before we get too excited, we'd better enlighten you a bit about the game itself. Or better yet, let our new pal Adam Perfect do it. He's the guy who's scripting all the missions on *Breed*, so you can blame him if they're not much fun. Adam?

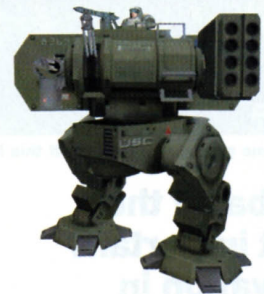
"That's not going to happen."

OK, just kidding. How about this game then? We've been through the whole 'don't compare us to *Halo*' thing. Have you found a more appropriate way to describe the action?

"We like '*Battlefield 1942* meets a more action-packed *Operation Flashpoint*'. *Breed* is on a huge scale and involves a lot of teamwork. It also mixes a lot of genres, so it's very hard to compare it to other games. Flight-sim fans could have fun with the flight missions, driving fans can enjoy the ground vehicles and shooter fans will enjoy it all because a lot of shooting goes on. Basically, there's something there for everyone, but even if you don't like flying, it's kept simple enough that you won't be left cursing Brat for forcing it upon you."

Our own experiences with the game support this. Like in *Battlefield 1942*, you can pilot all sorts of vehicles, both friendly and alien types, and pick up the control physics fairly quickly (see the How To Haul Ass panel for more on vehicles). But where *1942* just provided a big toolbox for players to bring to life in multiplayer, *Breed* is very

"Breed is going to put the big studios to absolute shame"



OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

JUST WHO ARE THESE BREED ANYWAY?

Well, basically, the Breed are a tricky bunch of semi-robotic aliens on the hunt for a new home planet. Earth looks pretty tasty, but in typically devious fashion they attack our new Martian colony instead. Earth's entire space fleet is rallied and sent to Mars, where they take massive losses, but are eventually victorious. However, when the Darwin, the one remaining operational ship in the fleet, returns home, the crew finds Earth under alien occupation. "The whole Martian war was simply a diversionary tactic while the more intelligent Breed took control of Earth," explains Adam. "This is where the game kicks in and you will lead a number of missions down to the planet from the Darwin, which is hiding cloaked in Earth orbit, to gather data on how the Breed won and then start making sharp guerrilla strikes against their still-weak defences."

That's that then. Not that we need any excuse to shoot aliens in the head, but it's nice just the same.



Bloody Breed. They come here, they take our jobs, our women, our planet.

CV

BRAT DESIGNS

Brat Designs is a surprisingly small games studio located in the Northeast of England, formed by industry veterans Ed Scio and Jason Gee. The team currently hovers at around 10 full-time staff

2000 Brat Designs is formed and work begins on the proprietary Mercury engine.

A highly qualified core team is put together, with collective experience on games such as *Shadowman 1 & 2*, *NBA Jam*, *Thunderhawk*, *Battle Core*, *Forsaken*, *Armour-Geddon* and *Tomb Raider*, to name but a few.

2002 After being ignored by all bar ZONE for way too long, *Breed* picks up the Best PC Game award at ECTS 2002.

2003 Brat's first game, the sci-fi shooter *Breed* is released and takes the world by storm. The compelling online play puts a swift end to world conflict and heralds a new Golden Age of Mankind. A sequel is quickly announced.



Gwapple me gwapenuts look at all this lovely vegetation.

"Probably the most important innovation in *Breed* is the sheer scale of the environments"

ADAM PERFECT
BRAT DESIGNS

much focused on providing a tight and structured (yet still wonderfully varied) single-player experience.

NOT A SEAM IN SIGHT

Take the first level in the game. As in many of the missions, you begin the action aboard your mothership, the USC Darwin, where a dropship is preparing for launch in the hangar bay. If you want, you can just run around inside the Darwin for a while, investigating the massive hangar space and its contents, but soon enough, the persistent requests from the ship's computer for you to board the dropship will get the better of you, and you'll join the rest of your team in the waiting vessel.

As soon as you board, the hatch closes and you're off. The ship is on auto-pilot, so

at this point you're quite free to gape in amazement as the azure orb of the Earth looms before you. The hull glows red as you enter the atmosphere, the view out the windows disappears briefly in a white haze... and you're through.

The earthly terrain stretches out below you, possibly a little closer than you might have expected, but convincingly vast and planet-like nonetheless.

The boys at Brat are particularly proud of this bit, so we'd better let Adam have a word: "Probably the most important innovation in *Breed* is the sheer scale of the environments. You can fly down to Earth from the Darwin with a seamless transition through the atmosphere (ie no annoying loading screen), land, get out and go through what would be a whole

mission on land in another game before getting back in the dropship at the end and flying home."

DIE ALIEN SCUM

There's no doubt that all of this is impressive stuff in technology terms, but it's shooting aliens that we really want to know about. Fortunately, you get your first chance before you've even hit the ground.

As you're approaching the surface, a door whooshes open, allowing you to lean out and lob grenades into the middle of a mass of scuttling aliens, sending their twisted robotic forms flying left and right.

Once on the ground, and despite your best airborne efforts, you find yourself mobbed by waves of laser-toting alien grunts. Your team quickly gets to work thinning their ranks, but it's clear you're up against a highly organised force.

"The enemy will definitely feel co-ordinated," agrees Adam. "Enemy soldiers spread out to surround you with fire, try to dodge your shells and bullets, do cool commando rolls to jump out of the way, as well as taking strategic decisions like hiding behind cover if you're hitting them too much.

"You'll also really appreciate the AI of your fellow grunts. Many's a time I've just run out of ammo with a couple of Breed soldiers homing in and had that dreaded panic while I reload, only for one of my team-mates to jump in and save me with a hail of bullets and a well-placed grenade."

However, even without the Breed riddling you with plasma, you've still got to consider exactly how to approach an environment of this magnitude. Your job on this mission is to protect an engineer and get him to a central control tower, but that tower is so far away it's barely a speck on a distant hilltop.

It's only then that you realise just how ambitious this game really is. Each individual confrontation with Breed units plays out like a set-piece from a tightly scripted linear FPS, and yet the freedom to roam anywhere across a sprawling environment is all too apparent. It really is like no other game.

CALCULATED VIOLENCE

It's also worth remembering that this is an action/strategy affair. It's not just about running around shooting rockets and flying spaceships – you've got responsibilities to think about – a team, a family, the future of humanity. So while the occasional mission is a purely solo affair, most take the form of squad-based incursions.

Adam says: "*Breed* is definitely more of an action game than a strategy game, but you'll suffer if you ignore strategy completely. Being part of a squad and giving the right orders at the right time is a big attraction in this type of game, and we've worked long and hard on making sure there's a good balance."

One way to help set this balance, as well as vary the tempo of the game, is to not necessarily put you in charge of your squad. In many missions you're nothing more than a grunt, with your team-mates running around doing their own thing. Like *Medal Of Honor* with more intelligent allies.

HOW TO HAUL ASS

ONE OF THE MOST COMPELLING ASPECTS OF *BREED* IS THE SHEER RANGE OF VEHICLES TO PILOT

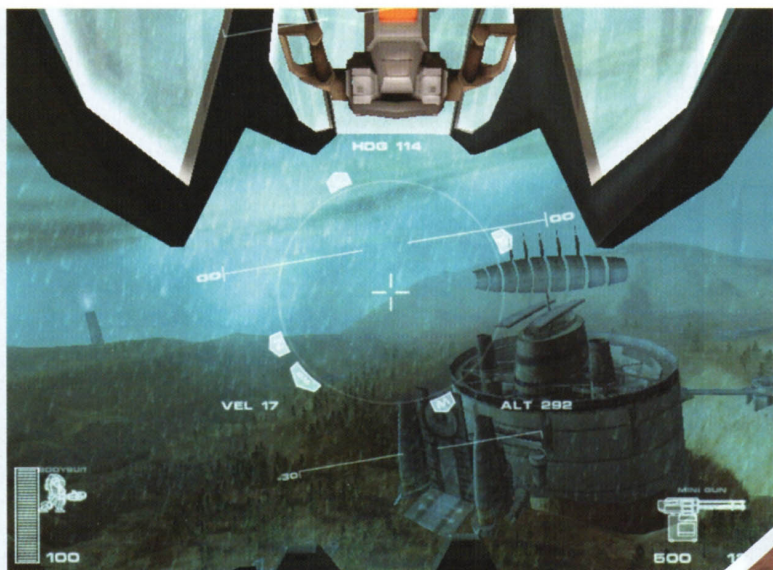
While a lot of the game takes place on foot, perhaps just as much involves various modes of transport, usually heavily armed. On the ground these take in everything from armoured exo-skeletons, ground walkers (kind of like the AT-STs in *Star Wars* but squatter and rounder), through buggies and APCs, right up to a full battle tank. You've also got a range of flying vehicles including tiny one-man scout craft, classic space fighters and of course the dropships.

Some missions see you taking the gunnery position on top of a tank or buggy, leaving the driving to your AI chums, while others require all your piloting skills to negotiate, say, a narrow walled canyon.

There will also be a wide selection of *Breed* vehicles for you to commandeer, but at this stage they're being kept under close wraps. "You'll have to wait and see," teases the ever-playful Adam Perfect. We did spot a few of them in the levels we played, but who are we to spoil his fun?



The vehicle design follows classic sci-fi lines.



"We reckon *Breed* has the potential to be one of the most enjoyable shooters we've played in years"



The scale of the action is virtually unparalleled.

STARMAN, WAITING IN THE SKY

THE OTHER KIND OF EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL COMBAT

One thing we haven't seen working in any of the levels yet is space combat. We thought maybe this element had been removed from the game, given the scope of everything else going on in there, but once again Brat Designs' Adam Perfect set us straight: "Space combat is definitely still in. It will include fending off enemy fighter attacks on both your dropships and the Darwin with your own fighter, as well as jumping in the Darwin's defence cannon and firing at incoming enemy craft." Fair enough. So while you can't just jump into a ship and fly off into space at will, there will be at least two or three specific space shooty type missions.

Interestingly, the rumour is that *Breed* started its life as a space shooter, so the quality of the action should be assured. And even if the space element is played down in the main campaign, there's always the multiplayer...



Orbital combat promises to be as action-packed as the ground assaults.



Additional variety is achieved by 'on-rails' sections where you man a gun turret.

Other missions however, do put you in command, at which point you can give basic orders (stay here, spread out, follow me, etc), set rules of engagement and switch between different team members. It's not quite *Ghost Recon*, but neither is it *Serious Sam*. "For the most part you won't be able to leave your squad behind and wade in alone," claims Adam, "mainly because you'll get mowed down by *Breed* soldiers. We're not making it too serious and difficult though, as this game is primarily about having fun."

FUN FUN FUN

Yes, fun. For all the seamless transitions and innovative engine technology, it all boils down to how much fun it

is to play in the end. And – call us crazy – but we reckon *Breed* has the potential to be one of the most enjoyable shooters we've played in years. Hell, maybe even of all time. The graphics are rich and distinctive, the environments staggeringly large and the gameplay mouth-wateringly fresh and varied. It all bodes extraordinarily well, and that's without even mentioning the potentially brilliant multiplayer game.

Don't just take our word for it though, as you can have a taste of the action yourself next month, when (fingers tightly crossed) we'll have an exclusive playable demo of the game on our cover discs. Told you we cared. [E]

The wrath of cars...

TOTAL IMMERSION RACING

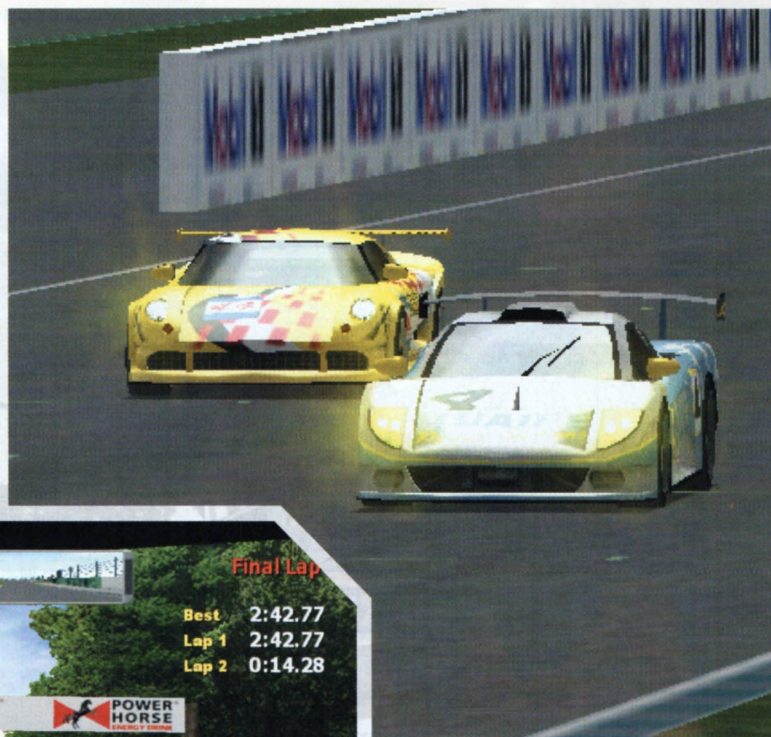
Steve Hill finds himself totally immersed. Once he's got out of the bath he sits down and plays a driving game

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Razorworks
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
WEBSITE www.razorworks.com
OUT November 1

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Intelligent, vengeful rivals
- Authentic cars and tracks
- Lengthy career mode with persistent driver grudges



Actual speed may differ from these screenshots.

LOOK AT ME! I'm driving a car!

In a game! Big deal, people have been doing that for decades. What does that tell you? Either that people like pretending to drive fast cars, or that developers have no imagination. Whatever the case, you're about to be offered another racing game in the shape of *Total Immersion Racing*, which hopes to do exactly what it says on the tin.

Those responsible are Oxford-based outfit Razorworks, better known for their great big choppers. We don't mean that they have particularly large penises, or even unwieldy '70s bicycles; rather that they forged their reputation by developing helicopter games. *TIR* represents something of a shift in focus then, as project manager Kevin Bezzant explains.

Piss off the other drivers and they'll exact violent revenge.

"Basically we needed a change. Our last flight sim, *Comanche Hokum*, took us about as far as we wanted to go. The game received excellent reviews and won some awards, so it was good to end on a high note. As a result of developing flight sims the team is very strong in real-world physics and advanced AI, so the switch to car racing games felt like a natural step."

BAD MAN'S WHEELS

Nevertheless, it must be an onerous task to attempt to come up with something original within the overtly crowded racing genre.

"It's very hard," agrees Kev. "It's all too easy to underestimate what goes into making a car racing game. When we were developing flight sims we had a team of eight people, now we're developing car racing games we've

CV



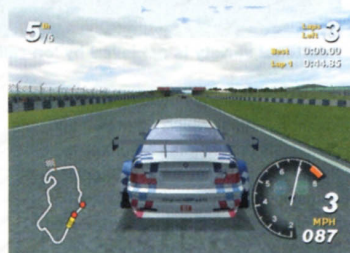
RAZORWORKS

Founded in 1996 by Kevin Bezzant and three of his chums, Razorworks made its name making chopper games for Empire Interactive

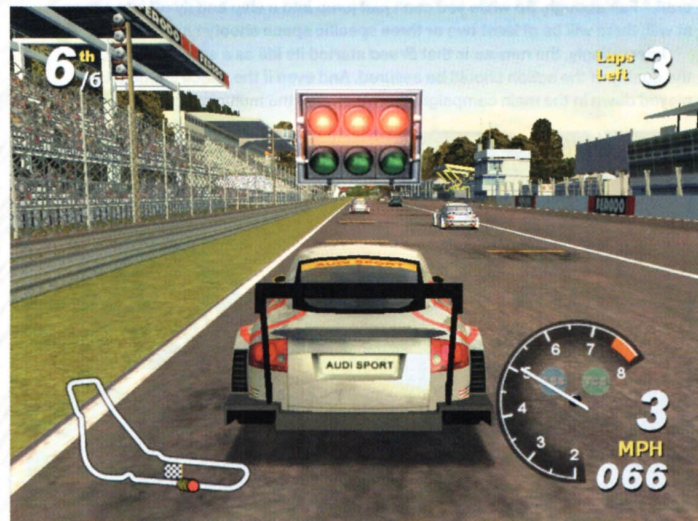
1998 *Enemy Engaged: Apache Havoc*
 Razorworks' first title let you fly two of the world's greatest attack choppers at all times of day.

2000 *Enemy Engaged: Comanche Hokum*
 Fifteen months after the first game, an award-winning sequel provided yet more chopper action.

2000 *World Sports Cars*
 In late 2000 Razorworks was acquired by Empire Interactive, who immediately set them to work on the PS2 version of *World Sports Cars*. After that title went tits up, the team got stuck into *Total Immersion Racing*. Any resemblance to *World Sports Cars* is purely coincidental.



Totally immersed yet?



Check out the accurately replicated tracks. Just like on TV!



The most intelligent cars to grace the roads since Herbie went bananas.

grown in size up to 20 and that doesn't feel like enough."

Moving on to specifics, the game will feature an array of expensive automobiles, lovingly modelled on the real thing. As Kev says: "All of the cars are genuine. Some manufacturers have been more involved than others. BMW for instance were very particular about its cars and gave us a lot of feedback to help get its cars right – and the cars are much improved for it."

A host of fancy cars would be no use with nowhere to drive them, but thankfully

TIR will be rammed with all manner of high-speed circuits. According to Kev, "There's a mix of real and made up tracks in the game. The real tracks are built from CAD data supplied by the track owners. Also we've visited all of these tracks and taken photos and videos so they are very accurately represented. For instance, if you drive the Hockenheim circuit you'll notice the very high camber around the Motodrom section. This's how it is in real life and not many games have included that camber. Monza is another track that we're particularly pleased with, as we've captured the crumbly, antique feel of the circuit. I've seen Monza in some games where it looks as though it was recently constructed."

WHY ARE PEOPLE GRUDGEFUL?

Crumbly tracks aside, much of the pre-publicity of the game has revolved around the allegedly revolutionary artificial intelligence. Tell us all about it Kev.

"Unlike other racing games, TIR has a totally innovative Emotion AI engine. Normally, any personality a computer-controlled opponent shows is scripted, and therefore it's the same every time you play it. In TIR however, everything

BREAK IT! BREAK IT!

UNFORTUNATELY YOU CAN'T



Do what you want to these cars – you'll never be able to dent them.

Having authentic vehicles in games is all very well, but it can often prove to be a double-edged sword, as manufacturers become absurdly precious about their cars displaying any signs of damage, whatever punishment you mete out to them. You can ram them into each other, flip them over, and embark on head-on collisions with brick walls, all without acquiring as much as a scratch to the

paintwork, which we can't help thinking sends out the wrong message to motorists. The logic behind this is fairly muddled (are we to believe they're invincible?); unfortunately it's once again been brought into effect in TIR. As project manager Kevin Bezant wearily concedes: "There is no damage due to car licensing restrictions so the 'shiny side up' clause applies." Bugger.

changes as you race, so if you're driving round the track like an idiot and cutting other drivers up they're going to get annoyed and probably have a go at you. The emotional state of the drivers towards you will be shown graphically just above their cars, with green indicating they haven't got anything against you (yet), to red, warning that they're well and truly hacked off. In the Career game the AI drivers will carry grudges against you and other AI drivers from one race to the next, which can really affect your performance. If you've worked an AI driver into a state of being 'fully grugged up', watch out, as they'll be actively looking to get you."

"Through the whole race driving experience. Hopefully people will notice their opponents aren't running around on rails and that something else is going on out there. Personally I've only managed to reach Immersion Level 8 – it's not safe to go to levels 9 or 10 without someone else present and only the foolhardy would even attempt this without Immersion Insurance."

You heard it here first. **[LW]**

Generic racing game screenshot number 12,658.



"In the Career game the AI drivers will carry grudges against you and other AI drivers from one race to the next"

KEVIN BEZANT
PROJECT MANAGER

BEEF JERKY

There you have it then, a vindictive racing game with authentic cars and a very high camber on the Hockenheim circuit. We've played an early build, and were more than moderately impressed. More jerky than the Notting Hill Carnival, but with some optimisation it could be a good laugh. The cars are particularly chunky and robust – fittingly so, considering they're indestructible – and while the handling needs a bit of tweaking, TIR is shaping up to be a worthy addition to the European racing game mountain.

Total immersion though? How is that going to be achieved? Kev?

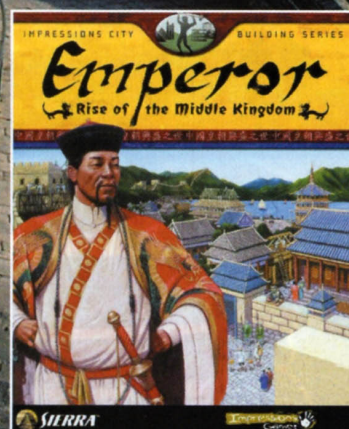
TIR will give you the opportunity to drive cars you'll never own.

They've only gone and put the map in my blind spot.

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The game is a virtual showcase of flashy pyrotechnic and environmental effects.



More cleavage than a cheap LA hooker...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Starbreeze
PUBLISHER Swing! Entertainment
WEBSITE www.enclave.de
OUT Late 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Looks bloody spectacular
- Good old-fashioned hack 'n' slash action
- Twelve playable characters
- Two campaigns
- Loads of weapons and special combos

Chop chop!

ENCLAVE

Nothing is certain but death and axes... **Keith Pullin** draws his chopper

THE MEDIEVAL hack 'n' slash action/adventure seems to have drifted out of favour over the last year or so. Since the dazzling *Severance* and the not quite so impressive *Rune*, there's been nary a bloodied sword in sight. Instead we've been bombarded with game after game featuring guns. Big guns, small guns, guns that turn into handbags, and the loner's best friend: a talking gun. Now more than ever it seems that nothing turns on the PC gaming public like a smoking firearm.

We're not saying this is evil, demented, obsessive or anything like that; we'll leave the sweeping generalisations to the politicians. All we're saying is that occasionally a game without a gun is still worth playing – like *Enclave* for example.

Originally a console title, Starbreeze's *Enclave* has managed to stay perched near the top of the Xbox charts throughout the summer. All well and good of course, but console games don't always make

great PC games. It's an issue that never goes away, and the question is will *Enclave* be a straight port or will it be specifically tailored to a PC audience? The answer is in fact a mixture of the two, according to *Enclave*'s lead producer Niko Kyriakidis: "The major difference will be that the PC version of *Enclave* will feature three difficulty levels. The challenges of the game are plentiful and often very demanding, and we had a lot of suggestions from users that the game would be more enjoyable if there was the possibility to adjust the skill level."

WEAVING AND CLEAVING

The PC version also offers more checkpoints, meaning you won't have to complete an entire level before getting the chance to save. On top of that, if the preview code we've been playing is anything to go by, the already drop-dead gorgeous visuals have been improved further to take into account the power of the PC and your hi-res monitor.

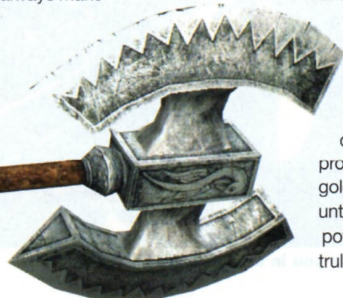
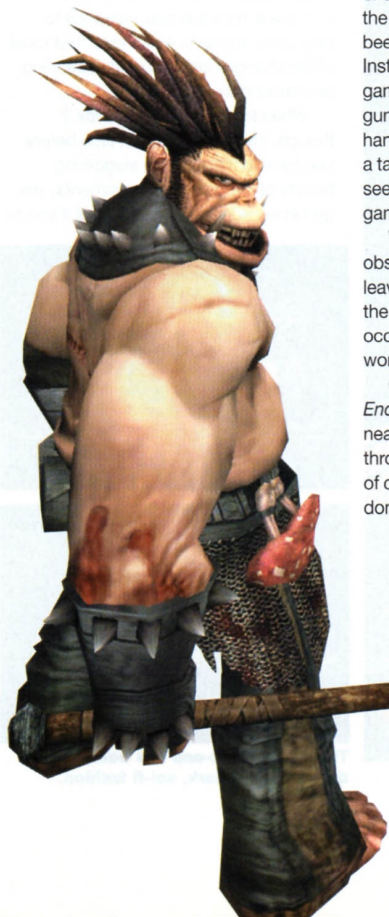
Other than that, the main bulk of the game remains the same. The action is fast and furious, with the numerous and varied enemies doing their best to keep your attention with a mixture of surprising attack patterns. As you progress through the game you can collect gold coins to buy new weapons and skills until you eventually become a destructive powerhouse capable of delivering some truly gratifying combo attacks.

"Eventually you become a powerhouse capable of delivering some truly gratifying combo attacks"

The game also offers two separately playable but interwoven campaigns, meaning you can play the game from either a good or evil perspective. There are 12 playable characters to choose from (six good and six evil), which in itself makes *Enclave* a different proposition from your usual action/adventure.

"Due to the fact that *Enclave* features 12 playable characters from different character classes, diversified gameplay is guaranteed," boasts Kyriakidis. "You can choose characters whose fighting styles range from typical melée combat to ranged combat and magical expertise." So whatever your gameplay preference there's a character for you.

The preview code we've been playing still needs a fair amount of optimisation before it will run smoothly on your average PC, but otherwise everything is in place for a bit of classic smite 'em up action. Look out for a review next month. **EW**



Take a deep breath... AQUANOX 2: REVELATION

An underwater shooter so beautiful it'll give you the bends.

Steve O'Hagan takes the plunge



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Massive Development

PUBLISHER JoWooD

WEBSITE www.aquanox.de

OUT Q2 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Looks so good that NVIDIA is using it as a showcase for the GeForce 4
- The submarine gameplay is out of the ordinary
- All-out action bias
- Plenty of sub-missions and bonus goals to keep you going

FOR THOSE, like me, who saw *Jaws* at too young an age, the sea will always be a place of great fear. Man-eating sharks, Portuguese men-of-war, discarded condoms – the list of hostile entities goes on and on. But as terrifying a catalogue as that is, it pales into significance next to the roving attack subs, hunter killer craft and impregnable guard towers that populate the oceans in *AquaNox 2: Revelation*.

THE BLUE PLANET

It's the year 2666 on planet Earth – or Aqua as it has come to be known since it became completely submerged under water – and the submarine is practically the only form of transport left to mankind. You play William Drake, a young and impetuous pilot who gets press-ganged into hunting for an ancestral treasure.

While some of the locations and one or two characters remain from the first

game, most of what's to be seen is new. Which is a mighty good thing, as for all its breathtaking visuals, the first game had its fair share of faults. We asked Massive Development's Alexander Jorjas about the changes.

"Among the criticisms from fans and the media that we took on board were the AI and the plot development," he says. "*Revelation* has much smaller battles and the AI is now more human-like to suit that. Special abilities such as sniping and guarding are accompanied by stupendous dogfighting skills."

"Stupendous", eh? So just how smart are they? "Some of the NPCs are really mean: hiding in dark places with their engines off so that your systems can't detect them. Or they'll try to get behind you and stay there in a dogfight."

Sounds reasonable, but what about all the long-winded plot bumpf? "The story interface has been redesigned totally.

We wanted to improve the feeling for the world of Aqua – its mood and look. We decided to pre-render animated backgrounds for each station and bring the habitats to life. When you're inside the buildings you can see the characters, bars, docks and offices – everything is much more real and believable."

HARPOON

The action is also far more intense than in the previous game. Sitting in a submersible at a depth of 20,000m makes you pretty familiar with pressure – after all, every inch of your craft has the equivalent of a herd of elephants pressing down on it – but the kind of sweat-inducing stress you get while tussling with hostile subs is impressive. Enemy craft launch co-ordinated waves of attacks; torpedoes make concussive thuds as they hammer into the reef inches behind you. It's a far cry from the sluggish manoeuvring of the first game.

Still, there are plenty of familiar elements. The weapon load-outs of plasma cannons, slug guns and a variety of torpedoes are similar to those of the first title, and the action supposedly takes place around the same time period.

"There are a few new weapons to play with," explains Alexander. "But most of the changes are to do with balancing and secondary fire modes."

When talking about *AquaNox 2* though, it's only a matter of time before you have to mention the staggering beauty of the game's environments. Yes, gameplay is king and all that, but if you're



If all else fails, ram the kelp-munching bastards.



Run silent, run deep: your heads-up display includes a 'noise' indicator to help you in stealth-based missions.



The whole front-end has been redesigned in a dark, sci-fi fashion.

"The action is far more intense. It's a far cry from the sluggish manoeuvring of the first game"



Hang on, with all that pressure, wouldn't it implode?

looking to show off your new graphics card, you could do a lot worse.

Shafts of light penetrate to the ocean floor, casting undulating shadows across the submerged dunes and blinding you when you peer directly into them. Torpedoes trail a wake of gently rising bubbles before the detonation sends out violent, concentric shock waves. Dust kicks up from the impact of your slugs as you pepper a fleeing fighter sub. In fact, it all looks so good that the game has been selected by NVIDIA as a showcase title for the powers of its latest graphics cards.

COURAGE UNDER WATER

The game's default controls are laid out like an FPS, with the mouse pointing your ship in all directions, and the keyboard propelling you forwards, backwards or sideways. In feel, it's reminiscent of a

space combat sim or *Descent*-style go-anywhere shooter, as you're fighting in three dimensions with enemies coming at you from behind, above and below. And as you're moving in water, your ship has a certain sluggish inertia. But as Alexander is at pains to point out, *AquaNox 2* is an action game, not a sim.

SUB(MARINE) MISSIONS

Though the plot will be fairly linear, sub-missions with lucrative rewards will also be on offer. "The main missions will include everything from open combat to one-on-one dogfights, through to stealth missions and even submarine races," Alexander explains. "But there are detours the player can choose to take. And all the missions have bonus targets beside the main one, so there's a good bet that people returning home and seeing they only accomplished one of four bonus

The seabed has never looked so good...

targets will return to check out the other three. Each target will be connected to different rewards, adding a tactical touch as to which you choose to undertake. Do you want to earn the new torpedoes or that cool gun?"

Though we did play a level in which friendly craft were fighting alongside us, you won't be able to command squads of craft. Quite the reverse in fact. "In some missions, other friendly ships will give orders to you. *AquaNox 2: Revelation* is no sim. It's an action game and you don't have wingmen obeying your orders. You're the rookie – the other pilots are much more experienced than you, so why should they take orders?"

Q&A

ALEXANDER JORIAS



AquaNox 2: Revelation started life as an expansion pack, switching to a fully blown sequel halfway through development. We asked Alexander Jorias, managing director at Massive Development to explain why.

PCZ When and why did you choose to turn the game into a full sequel?

AJ During the last months of development, we simply didn't stop changing things until it got very hard to tell what was left of the previous code.

PCZ Can you tell us what's new on the visual front?

AJ Only a few 3D objects still have the same meshes, but almost all textures have been changed. We added a bunch of cool features like environmental mappings, letting us create thousands of plants without a significant decrease in speed. And all the weapon effects and explosions are new.

PCZ And in gameplay terms?

AJ The entire mission structure has changed. Not a single code line or graphic asset from the interface remained. We added more ways to control the game. Besides the usual FPS-like controls, you are now able to choose more sim-like controls. You're able to loop and roll if you want to.

PCZ Does that mean that calling it a sequel is justified then?

AJ It's an entire new story with tons of new code, new music and new sound effects, and more than 80 per cent of the graphics are totally new or at least revised. What else does it need to justify a sequel?

PCZ Fair enough, only asking.

Point taken. But finally, the burning question has to be: are there any sharks? "No, the oceans have been pretty much cleared of life by the catastrophe that wrecked the planet." Thank God for small mercies. [X]



The entire world is under water but luckily there's no sign of Kevin Costner.



Whoops, blame the new guy.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Digital Reality
PUBLISHER Wanadoo
WEBSITE www.haegemonia.com
OUT November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 3D space combat in the finest tradition of the genre
- State-of-the-art graphics engine allowing for 100,000 polygons on screen
- Advanced espionage system and research trees
- Co-op as well as deathmatch multiplayer options



Neptune's answer to a Little Chef.

Solar flair...

HAEGEMONIA

It sounds like an industrial weed killer, but it has Paul Presley looking to the stars

OK, LET'S clear up the big issue first. To the best of my (admittedly limited) knowledge, there is no such word as 'haegemonia'. There's hegemony, meaning leadership by a single state, which is taken from the Greek 'hegemonia', but there is certainly no current usage of any derivation thereof employing either the 'æ' conjoined vowel

"If the developer had its way the game would be called something sensible like Space Fighters..."

or its separated 'ae' descendant. So now you know.

Of course, if developer Digital Reality had its way, the game would be called something sensible like *Space Fighters* or *Galaxy Brigade*. Or *Star Bangers*. We know this because we visited them recently to check out their new space epic. The linguistically challenged title comes from above, indicating the usual big-nosed machinations of marketing people trying to earn their fee through the medium of unnecessary interference.

BUCK ROGERS

Anyhow, on the basic level *Haegemonia* is much like any other 3D strategy game set in space. Think *Homeworld*, *Imperium Galactica* et al. But as ever, the game has a few interesting ideas that are designed to raise it a notch or two above the competition. Heroes, for instance, add a quasi-role-playing element to the game, gaining in experience as battles go in their favour and bringing individual skills to the roles you assign them.

Then there's the advanced espionage system, the five separate races, natural space phenomena that affect the tactical decisions you make, an on-going storyline that runs seamlessly through the campaign missions and both deathmatch and co-op multiplayer missions for those of you with friends. And, of course, it looks like a million bucks.

The background primarily concerns the ongoing disputes between Earth and the Martian colonists fighting for independence. The two main campaigns tell the story from either side, although it's

not long before several alien races arrive on the scene and force the two enemies to battle grudgingly alongside each other.

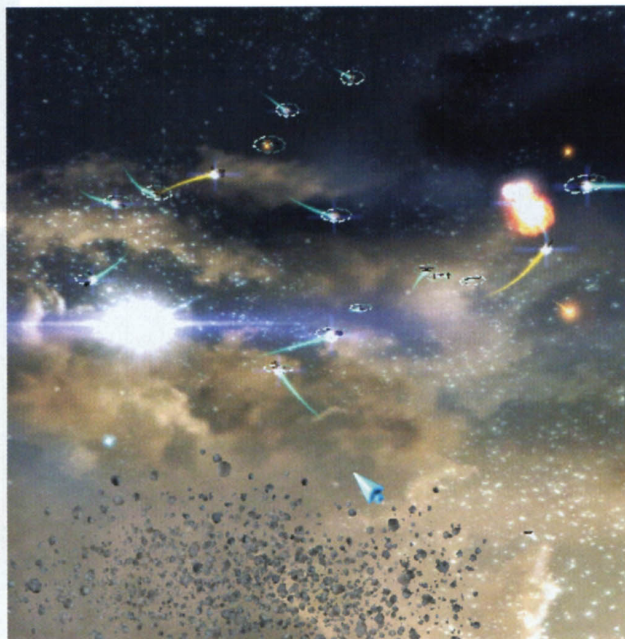
Aside from combat, *Haegemonia* has an element of resource management, taking in mining, taxation, colonisation, production and R&D. Interestingly, your heroes can be assigned to planets as well as ships, boosting population morale and increasing output. The research tree requires a bit more thought than usual, with fixed spending levels limiting the paths you can travel along.

HANDS-ON

Having spent a week with some pre-beta code I have to say there's still work to be done on the game balancing side. The current system allows you to transfer units and heroes from one mission to the next. But since some missions don't allow you to rebuild your forces before plunging you into a major assault, you're often put into an impossible situation before you even begin.

The tactical front also needs some beefing up. Despite the fact that you're in space, combat still feels pretty two dimensional, although the concept of fighting alongside allied forces adds to the strategy somewhat.

Haegemonia could well be a decent successor to the *Imperium Galactica* series, provided Digital Reality takes the time to give the game a good wash and buff, refining the game mechanics a bit and brushing up the interface to make it more user-friendly. **PCZ**



Whatever happened to the inky blackness of space?



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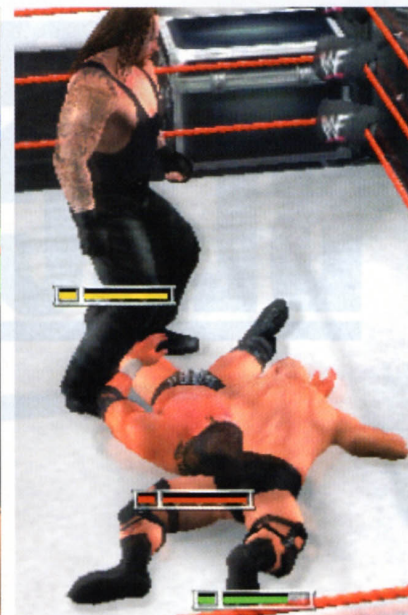
NovaWorld

PC CD-ROM

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"It's fun to stay at the Y... M... C... A."



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Anchor
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE www.anchorinc.co.jp
OUT November 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Finally, the WWE has come to the PC
- 35 WWE superstars to play as
- Accurately recreated entrances
- TV-style presentation
- Strategic fighting engine

Pass the baby oil... WWE RAW

The following wrestling game preview is set for two pages. Making his way to his computer, weighing 205 pounds... **Martin Korda**

WRESTLING'S come a long way since Kent Walton and his travelling band of theatrical fat-boys – better known as British wrestlers of the 1980s – were booted off Saturday afternoon television way back in 1988. Who can forget the likes of the late Big Daddy, aka Shirley Crabtree (that's a bloody girl's name) – a pasty 350-pound fat boy who looked like a giant baby? Or Giant Haystacks, a 475-pound fatter boy who defied doctors' prognoses and managed to walk without the aid of an industrial sized crane? Not to mention everyone's favourite hooded lard-arse, Kendo Nakasaki (Special Gimmick – he wore a mask). They were athletes honed to physical imperfection, who lumbered around the ring on creaking knees pummeling their two-and-a-half stone opponents into feigned submission. Usually by jumping on them. Or falling over from exhaustion on them. Basically, they were rubbish.

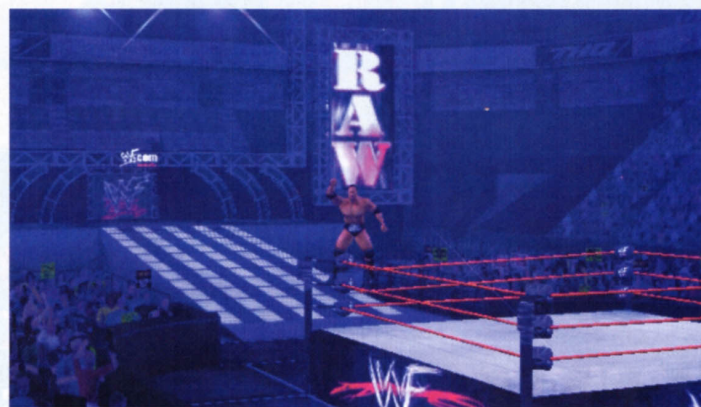
Today, the razzmatazz of the WWF – now renamed to the WWE due to the mewling of a bunch of tree hugging animal lovers – is a world away from the granny-baiting days of English pro-wrestling's murky past, and come November, you'll be able to experience

these grappling thrills first hand on your PC with *WWE RAW*.

FINALLY...

After years of casting jealous glances at console owners, *WWE RAW* will finally give us PC owners the chance to take control of our fave WWE superstars, or depending on your views on pro-wrestling, a bunch of oiled-up nancy boys who prance around grabbing their opponents between the legs and burying their faces in

each other's crotches. Your choice will be far from limited, with 35 wrestlers at your disposal, each with superbly recreated ring-entrances, and mannerisms copied in the minutest detail. Which means you'll see William Regal mincing down the ramp and Triple-H spitting water around the arena, leaving greasy puddles just waiting for some burger-munching redneck opportunist to purposefully slip over on, graze their ear and sue the company for several million dollars.



The crowd parted quickly when they smelt what the Rock was cooking.

CV

ANCHOR

ANCHOR INC

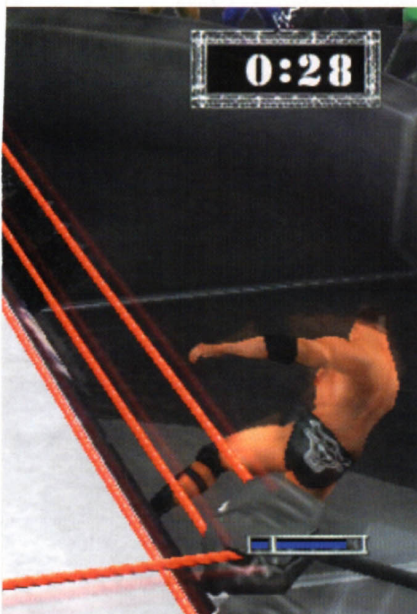
WWE RAW is the first PC game Anchor has worked on, although it's an Xbox title as well

1998 Fighting Cup (N64)

Arriving just as the N64 was in its final death throes, this average beat 'em up took absolutely no one by storm.

2000 Ultimate Fighting Championship (DC)

Using the same fight engine as *WWE RAW*, *UFC* was almost universally heralded as one of the best beat 'em ups on the Dreamcast.



A warm welcome for the new jail birds.



There's only one thing the crowd wants to see now.



Hands up if you're a hard arse.

THQ claims that the intuitive console-like control system will make *RAW* incredibly easy to pick up for even the most average of Joes, while gamepad-adept above average Floes should be pulling off stunning combination moves within a matter of minutes. But as ever, the proof is in the playing.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Getting hold of some code, however, was far from easy, and involved a near-fatal tag-team match involving two of THQ's finest, Ian Vincible (aka Terence the janitor) and The Stoat (a work experience kid called Oscar). Lining up against them

"All the finishing moves are here, from Kane's throat-tearing, Choke-Slam to Triple H's 'while you're down there, love' Pedigree"

were the awesome powers Dave 'The Oak' Woods, who claims to weigh a staggering 103 pounds (personally I think he's trying to squeeze a couple of pounds in on us) and Chris 'Skeletor' Anderson (18 pounds, 12 ounces). Fortunately they won and walked away with the code, although it was looking pretty ropery there for a while when Dave nearly tapped out when Oscar administered an agonising Chinese Burn on him.

RIPPLING MANFLESH

Had the boys played this first though, they probably would have done a lot better, as each of the 35 WWE superstars featured have a full repertoire of locks, throws and superb counter-attacks, which make the action far more strategic than your average joypad-pummelling beat 'em up. Better still, every single character's 'Finishing Move' is also here, ranging from Kane's throat-tearing Choke-Slam to Triple H's 'while you're down there, love' Pedigree. The attention to detail is excellent. Grapplers roll round on the canvas in agony and pose to the crowd when they're winning. There's also

some great TV-style presentation and a variety of camera angles and replays.

JUST BRING IT

We weren't disappointed with the number of match options either, with anything from singles matches to Royal Rumble tournaments available. The action was frenetic as new-boy Jamie and I controlled our custom-made wrestlers (created with the wrestler editor) with joypads, during a tag-match against Dave and Anthony, who pummelled their joysticks with the intensity of two twelve-year-old boys who've been locked in separate bathrooms with a copy of *Razzle* and jar of Vaseline. The battle soon spilled out of the ring and hostilities quickly started again on the ramp and even in several of the ten backstage locations, aided by a variety of weaponry littered conveniently around the concrete floors.

However, there were a few problems. First off, the wrestler selection proved incredibly dated, including the likes of shock-haired Tongan Haku (long-since banished into the obscurity of indie wrestling), while lacking the likes of Brock Lesnar. And while the action was brutal, it tended to suffer from the type of motion blur brought about by class-A narcotic-induced hallucinations. Either that, or the kilo of crack I had last week still hasn't worn off. It's definitely one of those two.

Despite the problems though, *WWE RAW* is looking as though it could well make a successful grappling debut on the PC for THQ. Whether or not it'll be 'The Next Big Thing', or end up as a pathetic skinny jobber who makes a living out of being ritually humiliated in front of millions of people by having its head pulled off by more prominent stars on a daily basis is yet to be seen. Find out next month in our review. Till then, check out the demo on the disk and get grappling, as that's all you're getting from us for now. **EW**

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

SO JUST WHAT DID HAPPEN TO SOME OF THE BIGGEST ENGLISH WRESTLING SUPERSTARS OF THE 1980S? HERE WE TRACK THE FORTUNES OF TWO OF THE MOST FAMOUS OF ALL TIME...



GIANT HAYSTACKS

This behemoth enjoyed a modicum of success outside the British wrestling ring. After starring in Sir Paul McCartney's non-Oscar winning film *Give My Regards To Broadstreet*, he featured in the most watched wrestling match in British history when 20 million people tuned in to see him bump lard with Big Daddy. However, once ITV pulled the plug, he moved to

the US and wrestled under the name Loch Ness in the now defunct WCW, where he was generally ridiculed for his immobility and lack of wrestling talent. Sadly, Giant Haystacks died in 1998.



KENDO NAGASAKI

Once the most feared wrestler in the country, Kendo (AKA Peter Thornley - very oriental) has recently been reduced to a laughing stock after entering into a brutal altercation with his boilerhouse of

a next-door neighbour, about which of them owns an ivy hedge. Having porked out significantly since the 1980s, he's now so out of shape he's become twice the man he used to be. And given the looks of her, he wouldn't last very long if it came down to a ruck either. So for goodness sake man, just let her have it before she crushes you like a fig. After all, it's just a bloody plant.







Happiness is having a pet.

Owning a dog or a cat can bring chaos. They'll knock over your dustbins and get muddy paw prints all over your new carpet. But think of the love. They'll play with you, snuggle up to you, even lick you half to death. And there's no better conversation starter than having your pet perform a special trick in front of someone you want to meet. With a new, bigger neighbourhood, full of pet-friendly cafes, shops and parks, The Sims™ Unleashed now lets you create your own pet. But can you control it in the ultimate game of life?



All The Sims™ Expansion Packs Require
The Sims™ or The Sims™ Deluxe Edition to play.

The Sims
Unleashed
EXPANSION PACK



REVIEWS

SHISH, THAT WAS CLOSE



■ **REVIEWS EDITOR** Martin Korda

▲ Having narrowly escaped death only minutes ago, it comes as somewhat of a sobering experience writing this column, the gentle give of the keys reminding me of the simple pleasures in life that were very nearly denied me by a feral man wearing a dyed squirrel's tail under his nose.

Just moments ago, Steve Hill and myself were encamped in front of the Greek Embassy, fighting for the rights of our Mediterranean gaming brothers – him with a placard, me taking pictures – when a bloated red-faced man with said comedy 'tache, appeared at the window and began gesticulating violently, as if swatting away a persistent fly. Twenty seconds later, he came careering out of the front door, screaming at us to stay where we were as he bore down on us wielding a meat skewer (it could have been a biro, I was unsighted). In fear of our lives, Hill and me hurled ourselves heroically into a conveniently passing cab manically screaming: "Go, go, go, just f***ing go!" like a pair of bed-wetters at the bemused-looking cabbie, as we blindly clawed at the door locks and sped off to safety. Just days later, the anti-gaming law in Greece was rescinded. You make your own conclusions.

This month, we're starting to see the beginnings of the Christmas rush, with *No One Lives Forever 2*, *UT2003* and *FIFA 2003* leading the charge. But that's just for starters. If my sources are to be trusted (hint – never trust my sources) then next month should prove to be a reviews extravaganza, including the likes of *Splinter Cell*, *James Bond 007: Nightfire* and a massive multiplayer review of *Battlefield 1942* where we'll see if it's the game which will steal *Counter-Strike*'s crown.

It's chilling to think all this joyful gaming pleasure was nearly denied me, but gratifying to know that here at *PC ZONE*, we've done our bit.

They can try and take our placards but they'll never take our freedom.



Cate Archer is back and she means business. But is this the shooter of the year or a flop? Turn to page 66 to find out.



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. We know that occasionally

you might disagree with us but we're big enough to take criticism. You can email your thoughts to letters@pczone.co.uk, or get them off your chest instantly on the forums at www.pczone.co.uk. If you think you can do better then why not send us a review – if it's good enough we'll print it in the magazine.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

No One Lives Forever 2

What are you currently playing?

What's the best sequel you've ever played?

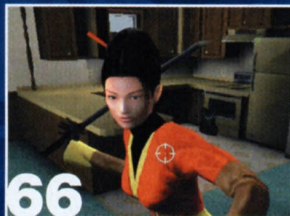
No One Lives Forever 2. Read the review



JAMIE SEFTON

UT2003 and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*

GTA III. Because it's a really successful move into 3D, and is a benchmark game



66

NOLF 2

Is this the best FPS of the year?



96

RE-RELEASES

Older games get a re-release



98

UPDATES

Patches and multiplayer reviews



100

SUPERTEST

Battle of the WWII games

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

66 **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2**
CATE ARCHER IS BACK FOR MORE STEALTH-BASED ACTION

72 **UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003**
CAN THE SEQUEL TAKE THE WORLD BY STORM LIKE THE ORIGINAL DID?

76 **FIFA 2003**
IS IT THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN?

78 **CASINO EMPIRE**
PLACE YOUR BETS NOW

80 **STRONGHOLD: CRUSADER**
SKIRMISH TILL YOU DROP

83 **EMPIRE EARTH:
THE ART OF CONQUEST**

84 **CONFLICT: DESERT STORM**

86 **TIME OF DEFIANCE**

88 **ARX FATALIS**

90 **TAZ: WANTED**

90 **LEGION**

91 **BATMAN VENGEANCE**

91 **SHADOW FLARE**

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93 **CHESSMASTER 9000**

95 **CELTIC KINGS: RAGE OF WAR**

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96 **RE-RELEASES**

INCLUDING GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO, BATTLE REALMS, RAYMAN M, DISCWORLD NOIR, SACRIFICE AND MANY MORE

98 **UPDATES**

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR MULTIPLAYER REVIEW

100 **SUPERTEST**

WWII GAMES GO TO WAR WITH EACH OTHER. FIND OUT WHO WON THE BATTLE BETWEEN MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT, RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN, SUDDEN STRIKE 2, COMMANDOS 2 AND HIDDEN & DANGEROUS DELUXE



72



76



83



MARTIN KORDA

UT2003

AvP2. It gave me an excuse to buy a whole new set of kecks



ANTHONY HOLDEN

No One Lives Forever 2 and UT2003

Just about all my favourite games are sequels, but I'll settle for Quake III



RHIANNA PRATCHETT

Divine Divinity

Dungeon Keeper 2. Bigger, better and more evil



STEVE HILL

Kingpin

System Shock 2, because of the monkey noises



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

UT2003 and Battlefield 1942

GTA III, because it's so much better than the other two. So different but so similar



PAUL PRESLEY

Mafia

The menu screen of Anal Intruder 4. For obvious reasons



NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

■ £34.99 | Pub: Black Label Games | Dev: Monolith | ETA: October 18 | nolf2.sierra.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb video card **DESIRES** P4 1GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 64Mb video card

A pretty lady you say? With skimpy clothes and a body to die for? Dave Woods is interested even if he did kick the first one to the kerb



INPERSPECTIVE

MEDAL OF HONOR

Reviewed Issue 112, Score 94%

The second best single-player shooter of the year. This is World War II though, so don't expect humour and cartoon antics, just gritty realism and a campaign that loses momentum after you've completed the amazing beach assault.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

Reviewed Issue 122, Score 72%

Don't like playing on your own? *Unreal Tournament 2003* might not have a cohesive single-player component (that's to come early in 2003 with *Unreal 2*) but this is now the best multiplayer game that you can buy. See the review on page 72 for more info.

The new LithTech engine is so spanking it seems a shame to kill some of *NOLF 2*'s adversaries.

"What do you want from an FPS. Guns obviously, but is that it?"

I AWARDED the original *No One Lives Forever* a desultory 69 per cent and it was one of the most contentious reviews I've ever penned. Some people agreed the game was a shambles, with poor execution, terrible AI and a mission structure that meant you had to wade through 14 hours of tat to get to the set pieces that almost made the game worth sitting through. Others of you loved it, thought it was one of the finest shooters of all time, and hated me intensely. In one heated thread on the forum someone actually threatened to come

to our office in London and batter me round the face. It was probably the mum of one of the developers, but she never showed up. Shame really, as I like older women.

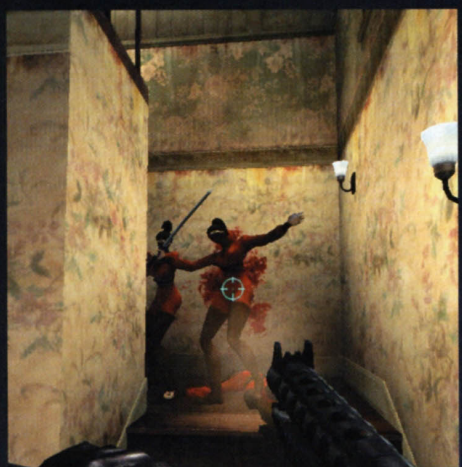
THE DRUGS DON'T WORK

NOLF might have been one of the first high-profile shooters that I didn't rate but it wasn't the last. What do you want from an FPS? Guns obviously, but is that it? Are you happy just to move your fingers from the back and forward key, alternately hitting the Quick Save key and bulldozing your way through a game until you reach the end? I used to be, but games such as *Wolfenstein* and *Medal of Honor* ultimately left me feeling a bit cold. *Wolfenstein* was too samey, and *Medal of Honor* was brilliant until about halfway through when it just became frustrating. After years of being slavishly addicted to straight shooters I wanted more. I knew I was on a slippery slope but I wanted something a bit harder, something that bit more addictive, something



Surprisingly the stealth elements work really well.





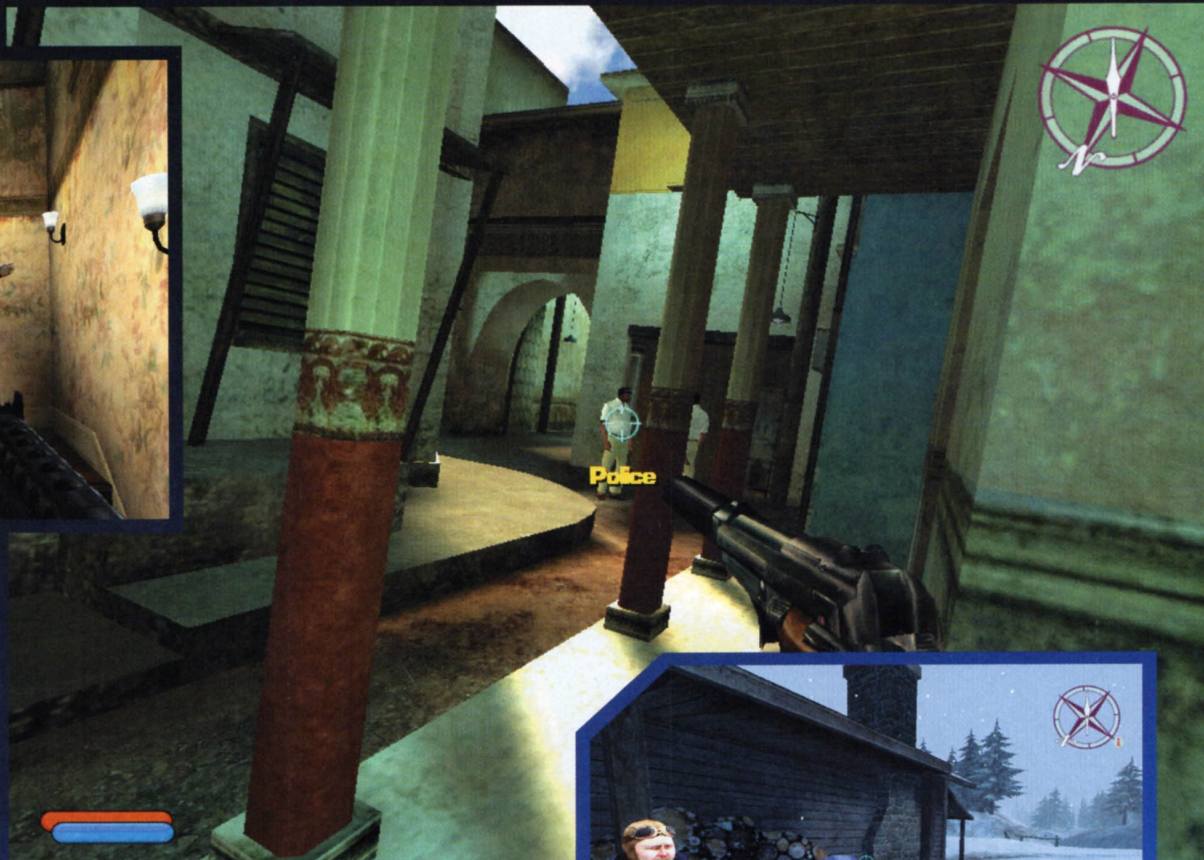
"Oops, I'm terribly sorry love."

that was going to give me more of a buzz.

I experimented with *Ghost Recon* and other 'real-life' games and fooled myself into thinking that lying in the mud by the side of a hut giving out orders to my AI comrades was the way forward. It didn't work – I always got the sneaking suspicion that getting through each level by either sticking my head in the ground or panicking and running away while the PC characters shot each other wasn't the way it was supposed to be.

FIELD OF DREAMS

In a bizarre twist of fate I even spent a whole weekend running around the lush fields of *Morrowind*, picking wild flowers and attacking small insects until I realised that the sun had been out for 48 hours and I hadn't opened the curtains/eaten/changed my underpants.



"The game is never far from a laugh, and amazingly the humour is almost flawless."

Things had to change obviously, and when the call came through – "Woods you lazy twat, get your arse into gear and review *No One Lives Forever 2*" – I installed the game and sat back thinking of England. I wasn't expecting a lot to be honest, despite Keith Pullin's enthusiastic preview last issue, and I certainly

wasn't expecting it to rekindle my love affair with the FPS genre, and I didn't think I'd end up stating that for me this is a contender for game of the year.

But it is. And it's great from the very first chapter, which concludes with a massive *Bond*-like twist before launching into *Austin Powers*-esque music and



You can ride around on the snowmobile.



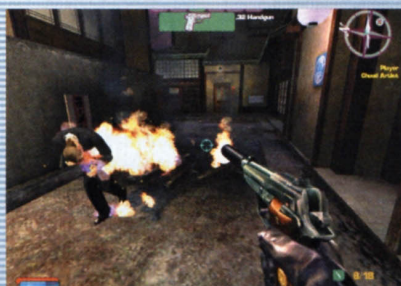
Gross dereliction of duty.



Rule number one: don't run through open doors.

NOLF 2: THE CO-OPERATIVE

NO DEATHMATCH BUT THERE IS AN ALL-NEW CO-OPERATIVE CAMPAIGN

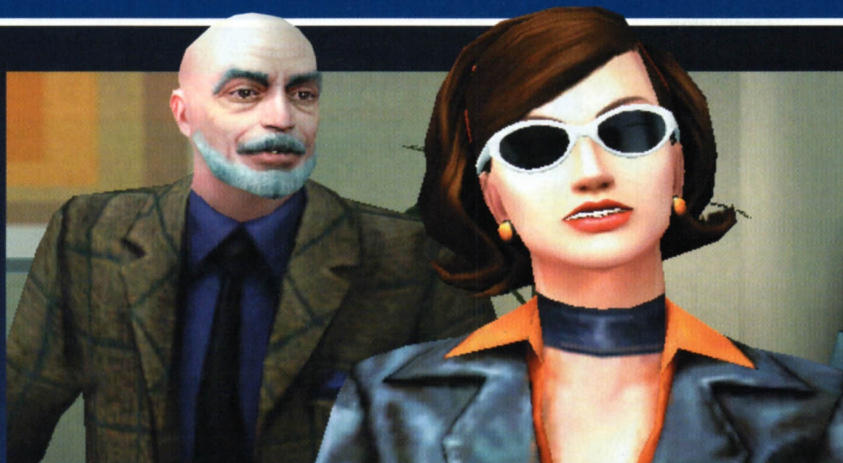


Set your friends on fire before making it up to them with their own harem.

NOLF was never a massively popular multiplayer game, and this time round Monolith has ditched standard deathmatch altogether. There's a bonus though, with an additional co-operative campaign that you can play through with up to four people. Each of you play a UNITY agent and your first job is to rescue Cate Archer – the silly lady's gone and



got herself in a compromising situation. Better let the men take care of it, eh? The dynamics work really well – if all of you get killed you have to go back to the start of the mission. You can revive dead players to stop this happening but when you come round you've only got a tiny amount of health and need to find first aid. Fun with a BIG F.



MISSED OPPORTUNITY

STICK THE KETTLE ON

With the inclusion of co-operative play and the disappearance of most of the problems from the original there isn't much wrong with *NOLF 2*, but some of the missions force you to take the stealth route when it would have been better to let you decide how you want to play it. Not everyone wants to keep redoing the same mission because they can't sneak past a guard, and it would have been good to give you the option, especially as the LithTech engine comes with crippling loading times. Reload, die in five seconds, hit Quick Save (sic) and wait for 60 seconds. It just doesn't add up.

"Chances are if you're getting really, really frustrated, you're doing something wrong"

this time round actually works, without being overly frustrating. And relying on stealth is a lot more rewarding than going in with your weapons cocked.

Sneaking around, using the darkness to stay hidden, listening to conversations (that might provide you with clues or an amusing anecdote), creating a disturbance in a room before slipping out of the window, and getting through a section of a level without using a bullet is one of the most satisfying things you can do in the game. You've also been provided with a number of stealth weapons and gadgetry to help you get around undetected, like the tracking device you can fire undetected into someone, leaving them displayed as a red dot on your compass. Keep an eye on where they are, make sure you haven't missed anyone, and you should be free to sneak to your heart's content. There are also tranquilisers you can use to take someone out silently, before

dragging their bodies somewhere where they're not going to be found. If you're feeling particularly sadistic, you can go to a location where a quick bullet to the head isn't going to be heard by anyone else – and yes, I did feel a bit guilty afterwards, but what the hell?

BRAINBUSTER

Of course, none of this would work without decent AI and although you're not going to leave this game thinking it has the ultimate in artificial intelligence, the scripting is subtle enough and clever enough to make the game work perfectly. Leave a dead body lying around and you're likely to be discovered. Anyone who wanders past will see the body, move up, talk to them ("what's the matter?") before running off to raise the alarm. And here's where the game gets even better. In most FPS/stealth combos, an alarm going off



Played with a GeForce 4 the game is jaw-droppingly gorgeous. You should see the water moving.

credits. Each of the 15 chapters is split into a number of missions, where you might have to locate someone, kill someone, find a piece of intelligence, or escape, but right from the off you're sucked in. Dropped into Japan, you have to secretly photograph a meeting, dodging

hordes of Ninja chicks or taking them out with shuriken and dumping their bodies out of sight.

The game's still pretty linear, although it's rare that you're forced to take one particular route, and all of the parts of a chapter fit together to make

one big level. It's sometimes necessary to backtrack to solve puzzles or liaise with one of your contacts. This helps to create the illusion that you're free to roam wherever you want, and means that the stealth aspect of the game that the developers are so keen to push

SSHHH! QUIET OVER THERE!

JOHNNY RAMBO WOULDN'T MAKE IT VERY FAR IN THIS SEQUEL. IF YOU WANT TO THWART H.A.R.M YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO HOLSTER YOUR GUN AND USE YOUR BRAIN. HERE'S A TYPICAL MISSION...



When you've infiltrated the H.A.R.M headquarters, find your buddy Kamal, talk to him and he'll instruct you that you've got to bug Anoop Bannerjee's office. Trouble is you've only got security clearance for the outer rooms so you'll need to find another way in.



Someone's left the toilet window open but there are guards watching. Shut the door so you don't attract any attention and climb out making sure you don't make any noise when you're outside – there is bound to be a guard patrolling somewhere.



You're nearly there but this is where it gets a bit tricky. The only way to Anoop's office is through these three guards, and you're going to have to wait until they're distracted in some way. When they have their backs turned keep low and get your arse upstairs.



Plant the bug on the phone and find somewhere to hide quickly – the screen at the back of the room should do the trick. When the phone rings you'll only be able to hear one side of the conversation but when Anoop leaves his office you can use the bug to find out the crucial info.



If she's seen *Indiana Jones* she'll be doing a runner.



The first girl-on-girl encounter ends in tragedy.

usually means that you're going to have to restart the level. In *NOLF 2* you can either switch to your guns and use the scenery to your advantage, taking everyone out that pours from the nearby buildings (hard, because you can't take too many direct shots before dying, but certainly not impossible), or dash for a suitable hiding place, watch your darkness meter fill up and sit and

pray that they don't stumble on you before they give up convinced you've managed to escape. Bits of the environment are interactive as well – you can open windows to gain access to buildings without being seen, turn lights off to hide yourself from prying eyes, and tip bottles over and brush against wind chimes to give yourself away. You can even set the alarms off

yourself if you want but that would just be stupid. If you're really stuck in a mission try looking around to see if there's anything you've missed. If there's a room with an open window in it, try creating a disturbance, attracting the guards and slipping out round the side and back in the front. Or look for something in the environment that might take

an enemy out without making any noise. Chances are if you're getting really, really frustrated, you're doing something wrong.

OH-OH!

And then I hit Chapter Four and it nearly went tits up. It might just be me but I just didn't get on with this one at all. It felt like the original – being pushed into relying on stealth in situations

where it was next to impossible to get through without being spotted. I hit Quick Save more here than at any other point in the game and almost felt like throwing the PC out of the window, snapping the game disc in half, resigning from the magazine, before taking a weapon and shooting everyone in sight before turning the bullet on myself. Luckily I persevered

SECOND OPINION

ANTHONY HOLDEN: IN H. A. R. M.'S WAY



The *PC ZONE* offices are usually a fairly genial place (deathmatches notwithstanding), but I must confess Dave and I nearly had to use our lightning fists to decide who was going to review this game. I'd been playing the preview build extensively and loving it, and was a little worried that Dave was going to do a repeat performance of his attack on the

original *NOLF*. Luckily, it all ended happily, as we're in total agreement as to the brilliance of this sequel.

For starters, it looks glorious. No LithTech games ever looks as good as those made by Monolith (it does make the damn engine after all), but this new generation Jupiter technology really does put its predecessors to shame. I don't care what you say about the cartoony look of the characters – I love it.

But beyond that, *NOLF 2* is simply an extremely well-made game. There's no amazing design innovation here – the whole experience is just put together with such a tight (indeed, cinematic) sense of pace and detail that your interest and enjoyment never (or rarely) wanes.

Plus it also has flying ninja chicks in it, which will always get a vote in my book.

“Chances are, if you're getting really frustrated you're doing something wrong”

TOP BANANA

WITH A GREAT SCRIPT, BRILLIANT VOICE ACTING AND A GENEROUS DOLLOP OF VISUAL HUMOUR *NOLF 2* IS THAT RARE THING - A GENUINELY FUNNY GAME.



If you don't want to kill someone you could always try immobilising them instead. An innocent looking banana can prove extremely dangerous in the wrong hands – good job you can't slip up on them yourself. Oh bugger.



A canister of laughing gas is the best way to tackle a policeman. He's not going to be affected forever though, so don't stand around and listen to his guffawing for too long or you might not get the last laugh.



I missed this the first few times I played but luckily I was killed and had to go back. Deciding to take a stealthier approach I came across this H.A.R.M. agent relieving himself off a bridge. I waited until he finished before putting a bullet in his head.



The head of H.A.R.M. He recruits the world's top assassin, who upon seeing him says that he'll find whoever did this and make him suffer. Rather sheepishly, Mr H.A.R.M. replies that it was just a skiing accident.



SNOW JOKE

A SUPER SPY SHOULDN'T BE EXPECTED TO TRAMP EVERYWHERE ON FOOT, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE'S A LADY.



Escape to victory... on your snowmobile.

Why aren't there vehicles in most first-person shooters? We ask the question constantly and get the same reply back: "We wanted to concentrate on delivering a pure first-person shooter, and feel that the inclusion of vehicles would dilute the experience." Yadda, yadda... *NOLF 2* proves you can have vehicles and they can be fun and playable. Early on in

the game you're invited to jump in a snowmobile and plough your way through the enemy guards. Snow... plough... I'll get my coat. But they're not just there for fun – in this heavily guarded compound there doesn't seem to be a way out and there are a load of blokes shooting at you. Can you see how you'd escape? The clue's in the picture.



Man against woman. Woman wins...

SYSTEM MISSION EQUIPMENT INVENTORY INTELLIGENCE PLAYER Resume game

PLAYER

Rank: Novice
Score: 12840
Skill Points: 840

Attribute	Current	Upgrade
Marksmanship	Expert	
Stealth	400%	1000%
Marksmanship	700%	1000%
Carrying		
Armor		
Weapons		
Gadgets		
Search		

Upgrade to Master (4000) (840 points available)

Click here to upgrade your skill to the next level.

Game paused

Collect skill points and enhance your attributes.

and the memory was wiped away by one of the best set pieces I've witnessed in a game. Moving into a trailer park, you can see a tornado approaching. Rather than just sitting in the background and being something pretty to look at, this whips up everything around you, scattering massive trailers in your wake and dropping lethal

power lines around you. The following Ninja assault is pretty tough, especially if you don't find the exit, but this is where I made use of one of the games most ingenious features: you can switch the difficulty level in the middle of the game. Simple, yes, but how many other games let you switch the settings up or down without starting again?

You look like you're in need of a good laugh.

This chapter is also where you encounter the first boss of the game, and again it's handled perfectly. Halfway through killing her (and no you don't have to do anything ridiculous to finish her off) she kicks a door down and runs into a house. When you follow her in the whole thing is picked up and you have to complete the fight at close quarters while you're flying through the air like an extra from *The Wizard of Oz*.

FUNNY HA-HA

And I've got all this way and haven't even mentioned the fact that the LithTech engine is looking better than ever. You're going to need a high-spec PC to make the most of it, but with a decent GeForce card and a processor over the 1GHz mark you'll spend a lot of time running around and marvelling at the huge outdoor areas. It's still more cartoony than other engines but this complements the style of *NOLF 2* to perfection. As Keith mentioned in his preview last month, the game is never far from a laugh, and amazingly the humour is almost flawless. There are some really bad jokes but they usually catch you unawares and before you can catch yourself you're sniggering like a 12-year old who's just farted in assembly. Most of the humour is carried off with panache though, and the story, script, excellent voice acting and set pieces encourage you to play the game the way the developers want you to. Scream into any given situations with your guns drawn

and you're going to miss hilarious conversations, or, something I missed the first few times, the sight of a H.A.R.M guard pissing off the edge of the bridge. It might not be up there with Peter Kay's *Phoenix Nights* but it worked for me.

KER-PLUNK!

But no games perfect, not even Ker-Plunk! Sometimes the game tries to force you down stealth-only tracks and it falls a bit flat. Some of you might have been adept enough to get through the first *NOLF* without killing anyone but most people (and I include myself in this) haven't got the patience required to squat in a dark corner for five minutes waiting for a procession of guards to quit smoking and walk over to study a painting. And there's one mission involving ripping down Wanted! posters that really jars – the time between the police putting them up and concerned civilians walking over to pick them up isn't enough, and you have to spend the rest of the mission dodging just about everyone you meet. Combine this with the need to Quick Save all the time and the fact that the loading times are pretty horrendous (see Missed Opportunity) and you've got the classic hallmarks of deep-set frustration. Other times you might have to pick up on something really obscure to

help you through a seemingly impossible situation, when access to a stealth weapon of some description would have done the job perfectly.

Thankfully none of these criticisms spoil what is an excellent game. Games don't make me laugh out loud, but this one did and for that reason alone it's worth a Classic. It's intelligent, well structured, looks gorgeous and attempts to offer something extra from the backwards/forwards/shoot cycle that most other FPSs are content to throw at you. Single-player shooter of the year? It is for me. *Medal of Honor* and *Wolfenstein* might have brilliant multiplayer components but both suffered in solo play. Not so *NOLF 2*. The King is dead, long live the Queen. [A-]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Looks Brilliant
- ✓ Very funny
- ✓ Stealth actually works
- ✓ Improved AI
- ✓ Co-operative multiplayer
- ✗ Bad loading times
- ✗ Need a high-end PC to play it

93

Pussy Galore



No need to get all big headed just because you won.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

"With a GeForce 4 screwed inside your box, the graphics across the many varied maps are nothing short of dazzling"

■ £34.99 | Pub: Infogrames | Dev: Digital Extremes | ETA: Out Now | www.unrealtournament2003.com

REQUIRES PIII 733, 128Mb RAM, 3Gb hard drive space and a 16Mb 3D graphics card

DESIRES P4 1.2GHz, 256Mb RAM, 3Gb hard drive space, 128Mb graphics card and an ADSL Internet connection

A new generation of 3D shooters is upon us, and this time, with no new *Quake* to stand in its way, the ever-evolving *Unreal* looks poised to claim the throne. Court jester *Richie Shoemaker* reports from the front line

THERE ARE things you are not meant to do in games like *Unreal Tournament*. Standing still is one of them. In fact, with numerous armed individuals actively searching for you, even slowly ambulating along is discouraged. It's a shame because for first-time visitors, *Unreal Tournament 2003* is a place you will want to take your time exploring. You can take in

the nightmarish vistas of DM-Inferno or DOM-Ruination, examine the intricate detail of the faux ancient Egyptian temples of CTF-Face3, maybe even take tea and scones by the ruined fortress of CTF-Magma and its commanding view of a lake of spouting magma...

Unfortunately standing still in mute and admiring awe is what you'll be doing a lot of at first. You

won't even be able to help yourself a lot of the time. Being hounded by two bots packing rocket launchers, you'll round a corner and come face to face with the head of a dragon that has met its end crashing through the wall. You'll stop abruptly, your search for precious health vials seeming insignificant as you examine the detail lavished on the creature by the game's designers,

the light shimmering off its carapace as you edge around its bulk. Then when your pursuers finally track you down and launch their fatal barrage, you'll coo with delight as the view switches to focus on your corpse, a cloud of red mist accompanying the fond farewell your flailing torso has bid to your buckling legs. Who cares about winning when losing looks so good?

Not wishing to overstate things too much then, let's just say that *Unreal Tournament 2003* is a beautiful game, even, surprisingly, on something as lowly as a GeForce 2. With a GeForce 4 screwed inside your box, with all the graphical bells ringing and whistles a-tootin', the graphics across the many





When killed, enemies fizzle back to life to fight again.



The boys are back in town, boys are back in town...

varied maps are nothing short of dazzling. We shouldn't be too surprised. Whenever a new shooter appears, whether powered by *Quake* or *Unreal* technology, the bar for graphical splendour is always raised and *UT2003* is no different in that respect.

Next down the list of new enhancements is the 'rag doll' physics, which make the act of killing your deathmatch opponents all the more entertaining. Bodies come apart of course, but

it's the way in which they and their constituent parts fly through the air that gift *UT2003* with a sense of humour the original lacked. Kill an opponent for instance and before the corpse dematerialises, you can shoot it over the edge of the ledge and watch it tumble into infinity, the weight of each part of the body affecting its momentum. It's tricky to explain, but if you were to jump out of the nearest window you might get a sense of what I mean.

SAME OLD SAME OLD

For all the quadrilinear willy-waving the engine can effortlessly thrash out however, the game's undeniable beauty is only skin deep. Scratch the surface, say with a Schultz-Metzger T23-A 23mm rotary cannon, and though the gleaming wall will momentarily be scarred, the structure underneath will remain intact. Those hoping to shoot out control panels and create a fire that will spread out of control (or even just to break a few light bulbs) will be a mite displeased, and it's easy to suspect that underneath the graphics of *Unreal Tournament 2003*, the aged body of the old *Unreal Tournament* remains. Even the voices of the bots and the over-enthusiastic commentator are as annoying and repetitive as they were before.

More a matter of taste are the weapons, which for the most part have evolved from the original

INPERSPECTIVE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Reviewed Issue 81, Score 90
Let's not beat about the bush here. *UT2003* is basically the same as the *UT* from 1999, only with better graphics. Costing just a tenner, novices with lesser machines would probably be just as happy with this – especially with the incredible amount of free mods available.

QUAKE III GOLD

Reviewed Issue 87, Score 89%
Purer, faster and arguably more skilful, *Quake III* is still the game of choice for the deathmatch connoisseur, but *UT2003* challenges it like never before. For maps and weapons we still prefer the old warhorse (we're so used to it by now), but for all-round entertainment *UT* still leads by a nose.

weakness, whether it be the damage it causes, ammo, its rate of fire or the ease with which it can be found.

Certainly one area in which the game has degenerated is in the choice of game modes. Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Capture The Flag are all present, correct and fine and dandy, but it's rather upsetting that my personal favourite, Assault – where one team attacked and the other defended – has been taken out. To compensate for its omission there is Bombing Run and a reworked and renamed Double Domination mode, the former tasking each team with finding a ball and getting it in the opponents goal. For all intents and purposes it's CTF, but with only one flag, and without putting too fine a point on it, it's bum. Double Domination maps on the other hand offer two control points which must both

UT. The useless pistol of old is replaced by an Assault Rifle with under-slung grenade launcher. The Sniper Rifle is substituted with the Lightning Gun, which means others will know where

"Underneath the graphics of Unreal Tournament 2003, the aged body of the old Unreal Tournament remains"

the snipers are thanks to the bloody great bolts of lightning flying around. The two other new boys are the Shieldgun and the Ion Painter – the latter a laser targeting device that allows you to rain down fiery death from orbit. Taken together,

UT's new arsenal is a finely balanced one, each weapon with a strength offset by an obvious

be held for ten seconds in order to score a point, and despite the fact that winning can be achieved simply by camping out one control point while half your team do likewise on the other side of the map, it's good wholesome fun.

SINGLE LIFE

Undoubtedly it will be the multiplayer game that draws most people in. However, let us not forget it was because of its more varied and challenging single-player game that the original *UT* managed to nose ahead of the mighty *Quake III* in the rankings and again, the developers have made sure those wishing to play with

ADRENALINE JUNKIE

PILLS, THRILLS, AND DOUBLE-JUMPS

As well as armour to collect and health vials to pick up, *UT2003* introduces adrenaline pills. Raise your adrenaline to the magic ton and by deftly tapping in key combinations you can pull off special moves or gain invisibility for a short time. Four quick stabs of the forward button, for instance, gives you a prolonged speed boost, while four taps on your back key will slowly regenerate health points. Another great skill is Berserk, which increases your rate of fire. It's a great system that rewards skill as opposed to just having people camp out spawn points for special items.

Double-tapping a movement key also allows you to quickly dodge incoming fire, or double-jump up to seemingly inaccessible parts of the map. Lower-skilled bots rarely make use of such abilities, so it's a great way to practise your skills.





MISSED OPPORTUNITY

GREAT GRAPHICS, WHAT ABOUT NEW GAMEPLAY?

Though it's the graphical marvel we all knew it would be, in gameplay terms advancement has been slow. With so many mods around, it couldn't have been too difficult for the developers to find inspiration and include some new gameplay modes over and above the standard deathmatch and CTF games. We're not asking for the realism of *Counter-Strike*, that can be left to the developers of *UT*'s wonderful Strike Force or Infiltration mods, but some extra options like simple VIP escort missions or bomb defuse maps would have gone some way to keeping us going until they came along.



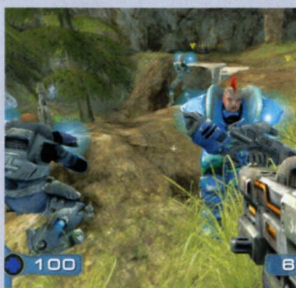
Is this the most violent ball game of all time?

"Taken together *UT*'s new arsenal is a finely balanced one, each weapon with a strength offset by an obvious weakness"

HOTBOTS

ARE *UT2003*'S COMPUTER-CONTROLLED ENEMIES THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS?

Unreal Tournament's bots are still unrivalled, and we're happy to report *UT2003*'s trigger-happy automatons are even more realistic than before. Not necessarily more skilled with a weapon, although we found ourselves having to notch them down a skill level from what we were used to before – just to make them more human in terms of the way they dodge fire or search the map for weapons and ammunition. We're not at the Holy Grail just yet – the bots do tend to take the centre line rather than hug the walls – but they are visibly more fallible in the way they scan the landscape for targets. Unfortunately what gives them away are their inane taunts.



The best bots in the business.

themselves aren't overlooked. This time around however, in order to climb up the single-player ladder, players must qualify through a series of Deathmatch maps before they can unlock the other team-focused game modes. Win the Deathmatch competition and you get to pick a team to play in the Team Deathmatch game. Reach the penultimate level of that and the next becomes available until CTF, Bombing Run and Double Domination are all accessible. Just to make things a little more interesting, you must pick your team from a pool of AI bots, each offering skills in four separate areas; Accuracy, Aggression, Agility and Team Tactics. As you progress, higher-skilled bots make themselves available and before each game you can set orders for each member of your team. *Championship Manager* this isn't, of course, but it goes some way to offset the soulless pretence that the game is anywhere near as entertaining offline as it is on.

Whatever the shortcomings of *Unreal Tournament*, it remains an unalterable fact that within a few short months, there will be a ton of new maps, weapons and mods on the way, if not already in circulation. As a base upon which to rebuild *Unreal*'s multiplayer game, *UT2003* offers a solid foundation for mod authors and mapmakers to

begin construction. No doubt some enterprising individuals will soon slot in a new Assault mode, and you can bet that the maps you miss from the original game will already have been built by the time you read this.

As it stands, *UT2003* is a stunning piece of work. Graphically it's an unrivalled masterpiece and in relation to the AI, maps, weapons and skins, there is plenty to dabble with until the trickle of new third-party additions turn into a flood. If you've got a high-end PC and new graphics card, *UT2003* is the perfect showcase for your hardware. Just don't spend too much time hanging around admiring the scenery. **A+**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Finely balanced weapons, varied AI bots and diverse maps
- ✓ Fast, fluid movement together with nice controls
- ✓ The graphics will make you pee your pants
- ✓ Stable online play, even on a regular 56K modem
- ✗ Disappointing new game modes
- ✗ Repetitive voices
- ✗ Pretty much the same as the last one

90

The beautiful game

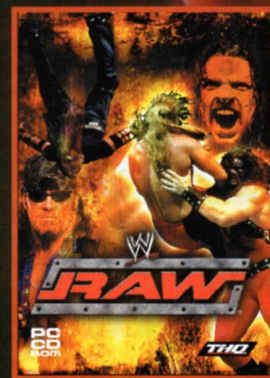
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FIFA FOOTBALL 2003

■ £29.99 | Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: Electronic Arts Canada |
ETA: November 1 2002 | <http://fifa2003.ea.com>

REQUIRES PIII 350, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card DESIRES PIII 750, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Is it that time of year already? Steve Hill looks at the latest FIFA offering

AUSTRALIANS and girls notwithstanding, we all like football here at PC ZONE. The boss is a long-suffering Coventry fan, Korda is an armchair Liverpool supporter, and new boy Jamie follows Leeds United. And while some might question whether it actually qualifies as football, I myself am gripped by Chester City's magnificent phoenix-like rise to the top of the Nationwide Conference.

It naturally follows that we also enjoy a bit of virtual football. However, there are six words you will never hear said together in the PC ZONE office: "Anyone fancy a game of FIFA?" What you will hear during the frequent moments of mind-numbing tedium is the phrase: "Pro Evolution Soccer 2?" At this point four grown men will sprint from their desks and gather round a large television set for a lengthy session of the greatest football game ever made. Cue much whooping and hollering, extensive swearing, leaping out of chairs, punching the air and laughing like children. *Pro Evolution Soccer 2* on the PlayStation 2 has enraptured us, and yet another version of FIFA seems unlikely to change that.

However, in the grand scheme of things, FIFA comfortably outsells *Pro Evolution*. This is undoubtedly a triumph of marketing, but also testament to the fact that people do actually like it. FIFA truly is a mass market product, and as such is played by people who would never describe themselves as gamers. The reason we don't generally rate it is because we know better; we are gaming snobs. The average bloke who owns a PS2 and three games thinks FIFA is the business. It looks great, it sounds great, and gives the impression of playing a game of



Raining in Manchester? Unheard of.

football. I have pointed out to such people that a better game exists, and on one occasion was thanked several months later for my advice. But why should I care? If people want to play FIFA, let them, it's their business.

STADIUMS ROCK

Those legions of fans have yet another opportunity to line EA's pockets with this seasonal release, coming less than six months after the World Cup version. As usual EA has denounced every previous

incarnation, trumpeting this as the definitive all-new version (and you can guarantee they'll say the same thing next year). Following

done a superb job in replicating them. Instantly recognisable to watchers of the world game, the attention to detail is spot on,

"Beckham's absurd wig is represented in its full glory, as is Seaman's fireman moustache"

the international shenanigans of the summer, the emphasis here is on club football, with the game featuring 18 of Europe's best teams. Each side comes replete with its home stadium, and as in World Cup 2002, the artists have

such as Man United emerging from the corner of the Old Trafford pitch. Admittedly, it's not life or death, but you might as well do it right.

The players themselves look mainly excellent. Beckham's

absurd wig is represented in its full glory, as is David Seaman's fireman moustache. The only major blemish is the lack of blemishes on Martin Keown's face, the Arsenal stopper appearing here as an airbrushed movie star rather than the pitted child-scarer who turns out at Highbury.

LESS IS MORE

Having players in a computer game that look like their real-life counterparts is undoubtedly big and clever, but the same (if not better) effect can be found by switching on your TV of a Tuesday evening. It's what you do with them that counts, and it is in this area that FIFA games have traditionally been a letdown. The usual criticism is that it's all too easy to score, with matches often resembling basketball rather than the low-scoring sport we know and love. Much of this may be due to the fact that the game is developed in North America, where scoreless games and draws are totally anathema to sports fans. This year though, the executive producer of the game has attempted to drum into the developers that 1-0 is a good scoreline. Midfield tussles are commonplace, and it is definitely harder to score, with simply pressing shoot from the edge of the area no guarantee of a goal. If proof were needed, the first game I played was a hard-fought goalless draw, and it wasn't until the third match that I actually managed to open my account.

COMPLETE CONTROL

Goals have to be worked at, and involve intricate passing and a degree of thought. Manually instigated player runs are still in

place, as are through balls, and though they often go astray, when it comes off it's a beautiful thing, and does actually resemble football. The sprint button no longer needs to be constantly pumped, offering



INPERSPECTIVE

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP
Reviewed Issue 116, Score 72
Relive the summer, except this time England wins.

FIFA FOOTBALL 2002
Reviewed Issue 110, Score 63
Last year's version is considerably inferior to 2003.



Shoot. Shoot now you berk.



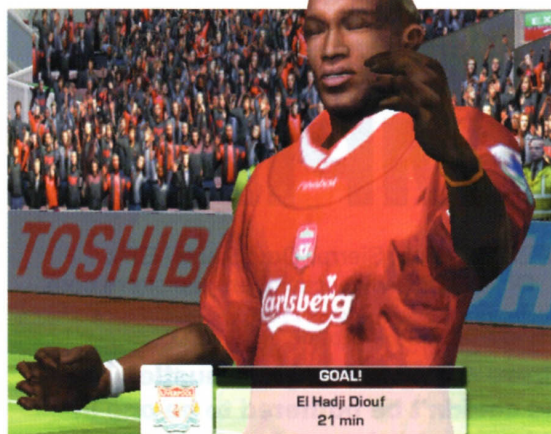
Pirez, back to his sprightly best.



Seaman, out of position.



Lots of replay options are available.



Scoring is much harder than in last year's version.

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE AT HOME

FIFA 2003 PRESENTS A SONG FOR EUROPE

Rather than using generic crowd noises, *FIFA 2003* features stadium-specific songs recorded specially for the game. So for instance, if you're at Anfield you'll hear the emotive strains of *You'll Never Walk Alone*, Highbury will resonate to heartfelt paeans to the Gunners, and Old Trafford will feature the eerie hush of a thousand Devon Reds eating prawn sandwiches.

more control, and it is possible to play some attractive stuff. Set pieces have also been revamped, using a pseudo golf game interface last seen in the much berated *Viva Football*.

Player characteristics are more pronounced, so, for instance, Ryan Giggs is capable of mazy dribbles, Beckham can whip a ball in and Roy Keane is a nasty bastard. These features are traditionally associated with *Pro Evolution Soccer*, and if we were suspicious we could feasibly suggest someone at EA has had a long hard look at that game.

Even the half-time and full-time highlights are uncannily similar.

Either way, while they have by no means matched it, they have created a very playable game. It looks great, the commentary – by John Motson and cheeky adulterer Ally McCoist – is so good you don't notice it, and the presentation is as glossy as it gets. So hopefully next year's version will build on the progress of this one and will be even more worthy of your cash. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Harder to score
- ✓ Less frantic
- ✓ Immaculate presentation
- ✗ It's not *Pro Evolution Soccer*
- ✗ Umpteenth incarnation

80

The best football game on the PC

CASINO EMPIRE

■ £19.99 | Pub: Sierra | Dev: Sierra | ETA:
October 25 | www.casinoempire.sierra.com

REQUIRES PII 450, 128Mb RAM and a 2Mb graphics card,
DESIRES PIII 500 and an 8Mb 3D card

Steve O'Hagan is a great hustler, but he couldn't be bothered to be one in this sorry business sim

CASINO Empire is endorsed by Hoyles, an American manufacturer of family-oriented casino-related board games. Over here, Hoyles is about as well known as the indigenous folk music of Dutch Guyana, so the game can live or die on its own merits. Not the best news for this substandard biz sim.

Your job is to manage a flashy casino in mob-run Vegas. You start with a small, two-room joint. Earn enough cash and you can upgrade and be placed in charge of a bigger, more glamorous gaff further up the strip. Tacky, medieval-styled tourist traps, enormous, opulent Egyptian pyramids, and smaller, high-class mob haunts – each offers a new floor plan and decor style.

"Your job is to manage a flashy casino in mob-run Vegas"

The first thing any gambling den needs are slot machines, the staple diet of the Vegas tourist. From here it's on to video poker machines, roulette wheels, craps tables, poker tables and other ingenious methods of separating customers from their cash.

BLOODY PUNTERS

Folk soon start showing up and cafes, toilets, security

offices, cleaners, cash machines, bins and all the other stuff will soon be needed. As your facilities improve, so does the calibre of client. From wide-eyed tourists, you end up catering for professional gamblers, high-rolling celebs and finally elite VIPs – accompanied by their vast spending power.

You can click on any customer and see their face and stats, and even offer them some credits. Especially funny are the celebs, modeled on real Hollywood high-rollers such as Arnie, Bruce Willis and Clint Eastwood. Expand sufficiently and you can join in on the exclusive poker games with your clients in the game's best feature.

Where does it go wrong? Well, with a game that has nothing more than a bunch

of spreadsheets under its bonnet, the way it's all dressed up is all-important. And *Casino Empire* is a pretty dismal looking affair. You can't zoom in enough to make the people much bigger than a match head, and the animations are lacklustre.

The haphazard system of item placement makes for ungainly, seemingly random collections of slot machines and dice tables denying you even a hint of aesthetic pleasure from admiring your creation. And the perspective can't be changed meaning that blackjack machine



Celebrities with fat wallets pay visits, if you're lucky.



Making your casino aesthetically pleasing and easy to navigate will draw in more punters.



Despite its flashing lights and bright colours, *Casino Empire* is a very dull looking game.

will forever be hidden by that enormous palm tree you just placed in front of it.

PARTING SHOT

As far as strategy goes, anyone who has played the *Theme Park* games or *Rollercoaster Tycoon* could play *Casino Empire* in their sleep and, indeed, may have to. Tried and tested techniques such as building toilets near cafes for customer ease and placing palm trees and statues near everything to increase the appeal are

nothing new. Even your competitors sending heavies to intimidate your clientele and smash up your machines doesn't provide much interest.

In America, where in many states betting your mate he can't gob as far as you off the swings is punishable by death, maybe *Casino Empire* offers a tantalising glimpse into a forbidden world. But here you can walk into a pub and gash £20 on a fruity, which would be a better idea than wasting it on this. **[C-]**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Celebrity guests
- ✓ Play poker with your guests
- ✗ Lame visuals
- ✗ Hackneyed gameplay
- ✗ Lacking in strategy

39

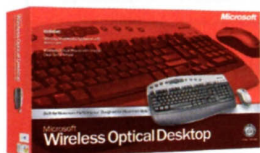
A game of craps



The Business

Give yourself the ultimate in competitive advantage, comfort and style with Microsoft® Wireless desktops and Optical mice. Get everything you've always wanted with a keyboard and mouse in one package with the Microsoft® Wireless Optical Desktop. Put the Microsoft® Wireless IntelliMouse® Explorer through its paces and experience unprecedented performance, accuracy, control and a clutter free desktop. And for when you're on the move, take the mouse into uncharted territory with the new Microsoft® Notebook Optical – the last word in comfort, style and mobility. The Wireless Optical Desktop offers a sleek dark finish with titanium accents and one-touch buttons that allow immediate access to the internet, email and multimedia activities*. And all Microsoft mice equipped with advanced optical technology let you Point, Click, Roll and Scroll with superior accuracy and maximum comfort on practically any surface. Distinctive and sophisticated – with so much advanced technology at your fingertips it's no surprise that we call them THE BUSINESS.

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Fire can be used to set bushes alight and trap enemy troops.



Although the enemy AI won't build the same castle each time, it will have a recognisable style.



STRONGHOLD: CRUSADER

■ £34.99 | Pub: Take 2 | Dev: Firefly Studios | ETA: September | www.fireflyworlds.com

REQUIRES PII 300Mhz, 64Mb RAM and a 4MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 550Mhz and an 8Mb 3D card

Rhianna Pratchett hitches up her camel and heads East



THE FIRST *Stronghold* (Issue 110, 84%) exploited that innate childhood desire most of us have, to build big things and knock them down. The big things in this case being giant stone castles, complete with their own array of security devices for deep frying approaching invaders. Not only this, but inside your castle walls you could build a perfect little medieval economy that whittled, baked and shovelled shit all day long.

INPERSPECTIVE

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

Reviewed Issue 120, Score 90%

This title focuses much more on the combat aspect of RTS and also adds diplomatic and political options. For big 3D battles across glorious landscapes you can't go wrong with *Medieval*.

WARCRAFT III

Reviewed Issue 119, Score 85%

If you want more of a story driven strategy game then this is the one for you. Although it's not a huge departure gameplay-wise from the original *Warcraft* games, this latest incarnation still has plenty to offer.

Less than a year later *Stronghold: Crusader* is about to be released. It's neither an expansion pack, nor a true sequel, but more accurately the second part of the original game, with a much stronger focus on skirmish play. The graphics and basic gameplay will be instantly familiar to fans of the original *Stronghold*, as they are virtually identical except for the new units. The environment is different though, being based in and around the Arabian deserts during the Crusades, but all this really means is sand and rocks where there was previously grass and trees, the odd marauding herd of camels and the constant threat of fire.

BURN BABY BURN

Although fires do spontaneously break out in your castle quite often, the primary use of fire is as a weapon for the Arabian troops, and a damn effective one it is too. New units include fire slingers, who hurl flaming pitch onto the ground (particularly good for incinerating slower units) and kamikaze slave units who amass in great numbers and spill into your castle setting fire to buildings – and often themselves – causing mass damage.

There are still a few glitches in the gameplay, such as unit collision with the scenery, occasional pathfinding problems

and the seemingly unresponsive AI of some of your units who don't always automatically engage the enemy, even if they may only be spitting distance away and gleefully turning your troops into mobile pin cushions.

PICKING FIGHTS

Crusader features a historical campaign, which is played out through both the European and Arabian sides, but skirmish play, which has never really been fully utilised in an RTS, is what the developers are keen to push. There's a 50-mission skirmish trial where you face bigger and

stronger forces in a kind of castle bake-off. You also get the chance to ally with some of the AI warlords, and there is a customisable skirmish mode where you can set up your own battles and pick your sides. This works well, and the developers have ensured the AI opponents

own units), so it feels like you're playing against a real person.

You get the feeling that *Crusader* is a more 'complete' game than before, and certainly much more strategic. In many ways it's what *Stronghold* should have been. There's an unfortunate lack of polish

"You get the feeling that it's more 'complete' than before"

have distinct ways of approaching castle buildings and different warfare styles (with seemingly better AI than your

to the basic game mechanics, and the gameplay, aside from skirmish mode, is almost a carbon copy of most of the missions in the original. But it also retains the fun gameplay of the original. If the first *Stronghold* was the meat and two veg, then *Crusader* is the best dessert a fan could wish for. **PC**



Wake up to camels in your cornfields and lions eating granny.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Plenty to do
- ✓ Great new units
- ✓ Good fun
- ✗ AI and graphics need work
- ✗ Very similar missions to original

82

The ultimate sandcastle sim

YOU LIKED THE MOVIE... DISCOVER THE GAME !

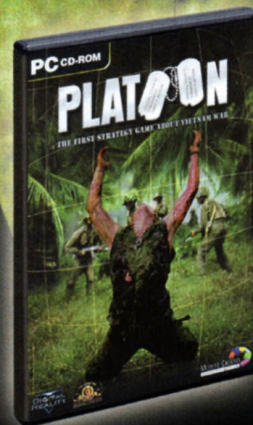
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ON THE VIETNAM WAR**

**Real Weapons,
in depth strategy,
hostile environment,
invisible enemies:
TOTAL GAMEPLAY**



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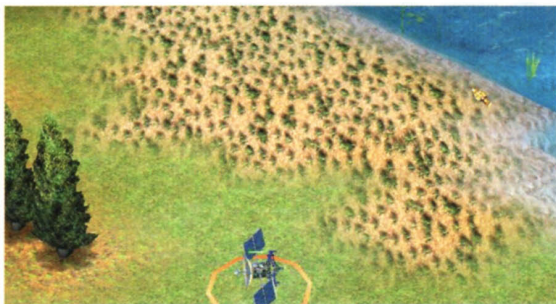
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Each epoch has unique buildings and units.

EMPIRE EARTH: THE ART OF CONQUEST

■ £19.99 | Pub: Sierra | Dev: Mad Doc Software | ETA: Out Now | <http://empireearth.sierra.com>

REQUIRES PII 350, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 600, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Honorary Earthling **Chris Anderson** gets spaced out with *Empire Earth's* first expansion pack



**REQUIRES ORIGINAL
EMPIRE
EARTH**



The graphics have had a significant upgrade.

IT'S inevitable that every mildly successful game will be followed by a money-spinning expansion at some point, and *Empire Earth* is no exception. The only problem is, when you've covered the entire history of man's evolution and even ventured into the future with the Nano Tech age, where can you possibly go next? The answer, as you may have guessed, is outer space.

The *Art Of Conquest* expands on the theme of the original game by offering you the opportunity to spread your empire beyond Earth's boundaries. You can do this when you reach the new epoch, the Space Age. The new epoch brings with it new units and buildings and makes an already massive game experience even

bigger still. This in itself is a worthy addition to the *Empire Earth* experience, but the best reason for buying this expansion perhaps lies in what was already there in the first place...

feels pretty much like the Nano Age with the obvious exception of a few new units. You'll have to play a fair way into it to get the most out of it, and discover the major differences.

"The graphics have been given a complete workover"

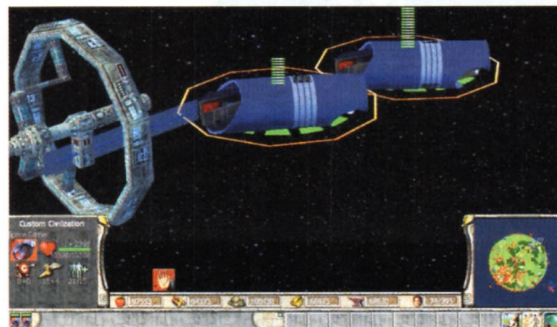
NEW EARTH

The graphics from the original game have been given a complete workover, and it shows right from the start of the game. All the units are more detailed and crisp, as are the buildings and the general environment. *Empire Earth* now has a touch of professionalism and polish about it that was noticeably missing when it was originally released, although units still look a bit blocky when you zoom in close. Overall though, the significant upgrade in presentation is worth the asking price in itself.

The Art Of Conquest then, is more than an expansion: it's an upgrade to many aspects of the original game. You have to wonder why they didn't do it this way in the first place. Cynics would suggest the original was rushed, but we are far too nice to suggest anything like that... [PC]

THE FINAL FRONTIER

The new Space Age is as engrossing and playable as all the previous epochs and takes over nicely where the Nano Tech age left off. Don't expect miracles straight off though. Initially the Space Age



The space age epoch adds a whole new dimension.

INPERSPECTIVE

AGE OF EMPIRES II

Reviewed: Issue 84, Score: 90%
This is still a fine game despite its age. It lacks the sheer diversity of *Empire Earth*, but makes up for it with deeply engrossing gameplay.

GROUND CONTROL

Reviewed: Issue 92, Score: 86%
If you are tired of resource management games and want a futuristic RTS that lets you get on with things with a minimum of fuss, *Ground Control* is just the ticket.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Three new single-player campaigns
- ✓ Space-age epochs takes the game to a new level
- ✓ Updated graphics
- ✗ Essentially more of the same
- ✗ AI still slightly suspect

84

Upgraded and expanded, and much the better for it

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

■ £29.99 | Pub: SCi Games | Dev: Pivotal Games | ETA: Out now | www.sci.co.uk

REQUIRES PII 450, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card DESIRES A P4 1.2GHz processor

With the real-life sequel probably already underway as you read this, Paul Presley volunteers to get sand in his boots

IN ITS PS2 and Xbox incarnations, *Conflict: Desert Storm* has been criticised by several console reviewers for being too much like a PC title – the mix of strategy and stealth not sitting too well with the action elements. Oddly, I'd criticise the PC version for being the exact opposite – too lightweight to really satisfy the kind of audience already accustomed to the likes of *Operation Flashpoint*, *Rogue Spear* and *Hidden & Dangerous*.

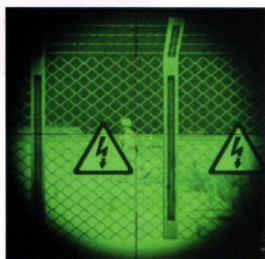
The concept is fine. Take control of a four-man squad of special-forces soldiers (either SAS or US Delta Force – visual

and vocal differences only) as you prepare the sand in Iraq for CNN's full-scale assault of the early '90s. Mostly this involves blowing up SCUD missiles. Not exclusively, there are one or two missions in Kuwait City and enemy airbases for instance. But mostly it's SCUD hunting.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Hidden & Dangerous is the closest comparison here, as you control each of the four squad members personally, or by issuing simple move and fire orders. But it's that simple level of command that shows up the

"Hidden & Dangerous is the closest comparison here"



flaws in design. A lot of the mission briefings hammer home the importance of stealth as a route to success. Unfortunately there isn't a great enough level of control over your units to make that a viable option for too long. Inevitably every mission ends up as a prolonged running fire-fight.

Also ruining the atmosphere are the miracle health packs that



Dahhhling! Lime green with red smoke in a yellow desert? Simply divine!

bring everything down to an arcade level. One medicated plaster pretty much takes you from death's door to the living embodiment of Nietzschean ideals, and as they are in plentiful supply you're never too worried about getting to the end of a mission in one piece.

BAGHDAD BLUES

On the plus side, there's a superb experience system at work. With a successful mission behind you each of your soldiers is rewarded not just with medals and promotions, but with increases in their abilities which, for once, do seem to have a bearing on your actions throughout. Use

the same man for all your C4 planting and he'll gradually get



It's not all sand. Downtown Kuwait gets a look in.

quicker and quicker at the job. Use your sniper for every long-distance shot and slowly his aim will get steadier and his shots do more damage. It actually works and compliments those already decent levels of independent behaviour that your units display (although not the enemy who are mostly morons).

At the end of the day what you have is a fun, slightly engaging combat shooter that with a little more time and effort could possibly have been close to a classic. The best way to get the most out of it is not to expect much more than a console action romp with slight pretensions at being something grander. **PC**



Drat. Missed the final boarding call.

INPERSPECTIVE

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

Reviewed Issue 104, Score 90%
The premier tactical military shooter. Everything you could want and a little bit more, thanks to the countless add-ons available.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS DELUX

Reviewed Issue 115, Score 86%
Closer in spirit to C:DS, but set in WWII and showing its age. Now out on budget with a graphical makeover, it's still well worth a look.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Atmospheric
- ✓ Solidly built
- ✓ Excellent friendly soldier AI
- ✓ Troops improve with experience
- ✗ Basic arcade style tactics
- ✗ Unrealistic health packs

72

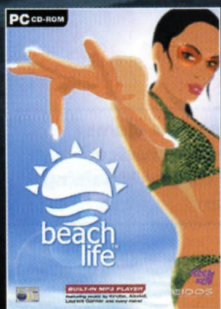
A fun but shallow tactical shooter

Wake up, go to work, go home, go to bed, wake up, go to work, go home, go to bed, wake up, go to work, go home, go to bed, wake up, go to work, go home...

*Or perhaps,
just grab a
beer,
sit by the pool and
admire the view.*



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PC CD-ROM

*Think you can create the
ESSENTIAL PARTY ISLAND?*

*Ever thought you could do better and build the
ULTIMATE EXCLUSIVE RESORT?*

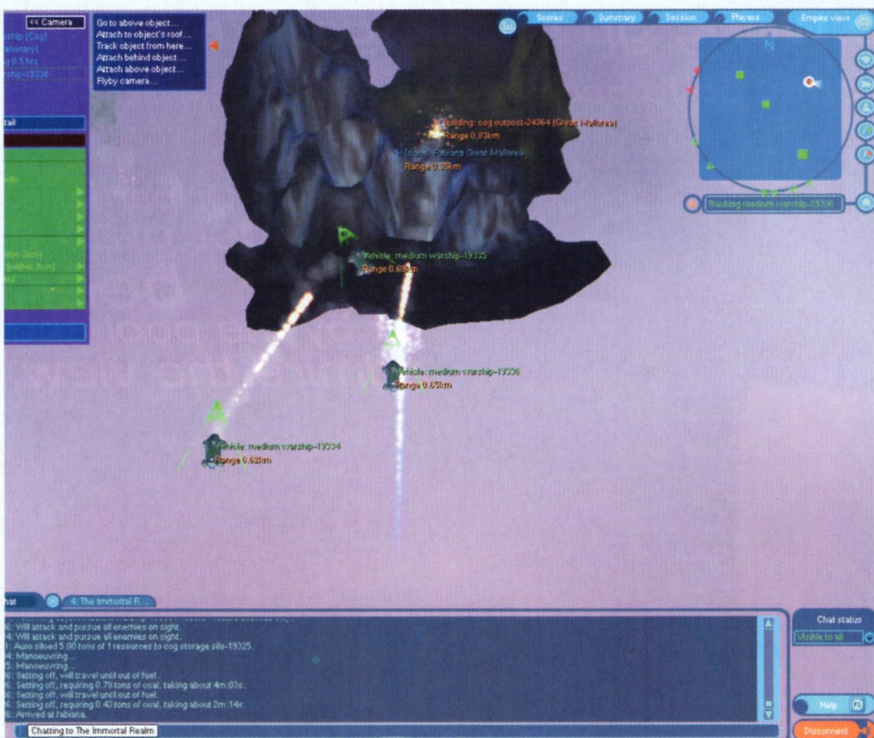
*If the answer is **'YES'** then Beach Life is the game for you.*



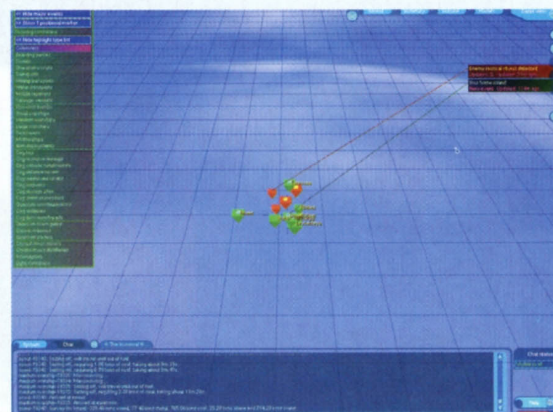
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A nice view of the action via the fly-by camera.



The main map. Didn't we tell you this game is big?

Inevitably, it all comes down to blowing stuff up...

TIME OF DEFIANCE

■ £7.50 per month (five day free trial period first) | Pub: Nicely Crafted Entertainment | Dev: Nicely Crafted Entertainment | ETA: Out Now | www.nicelycrafted.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 64Mb RAM, a 16Mb 3D card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** The above with an ADSL Internet connection is fine

Repeat after me: 'geek'. Thank you, says Chris Anderson as he wades through a space exploration game that redefines the word hardcore

THERE are some games that are so inherently geeky it's almost an embarrassment to be 'caught' playing them. If you've taken a quick glance at the screenshots on this page, you will have quickly ascertained that *Time Of Defiance* is one of them. In its simplest form, it's an online space exploration and planet conquest game with a fairly competent trading system. It's a full-on 3D experience (albeit without a first-person viewpoint) but the finer points of current graphics technology seem to have passed Nicely

Crafted Entertainment by, as *ToD*'s functional but hugely unimpressive graphics clearly demonstrate. Not that we care about graphics, we're above all that, well kind of anyway, but a little more imagination and style in presentation wouldn't have gone amiss. We can just about forgive graphical shortcomings, but there are some things we cannot forgive...

WHO, WHAT, WHERE?

There's a lot to keep track of. As you conquer planets (strangely referred to here as islands), build

up resources and begin to build ever more sophisticated buildings and vehicles, you'll soon find it difficult to keep up

"ToD can become fairly addictive once you get used to its many idiosyncrasies"

with what's going on. The interface doesn't do much to help the situation either. There is no handy table or database to refer to when you need to move stuff around from one island to

another, or from one vehicle to the next. There's a status screen which gives general info, but a breakdown of the islands you

impression it was released a tad unfinished and it may become much better when it's been refined. We'll be taking another look at the growth of *ToD* a few months down the line to track its progress. Until then you'd do well to think long and hard before paying out the monthly fee for it. Watch this space and we'll let you know if it gets any better sometime soon. **PCW**

ONLINE ONLY

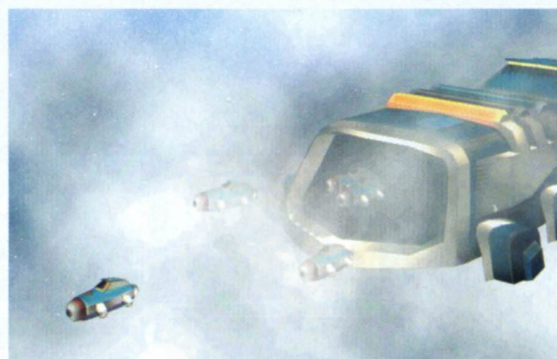
INPERSPECTIVE

JUMP GATE

Reviewed Issue 107 Score 80%
Another online space combat sim, but this one places you in the cockpit and has less of a strategic bent. If you prefer more action than strategy, this is your game.

DARKSPACE

Reviewed Issue 114 Score 65%
As dark as the name suggests, but less demanding than other titles in the space combat sim genre. A good starting point if you like this sort of thing.



Not the vision of the future we had in mind.

FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT

Combat is pretty unspectacular too: give orders to your ships and they'll attack or defend according to your instructions when they come into contact with the enemy while you sit and watch.

Despite all this, *ToD* can become fairly addictive once you get used to its many idiosyncrasies. We get the

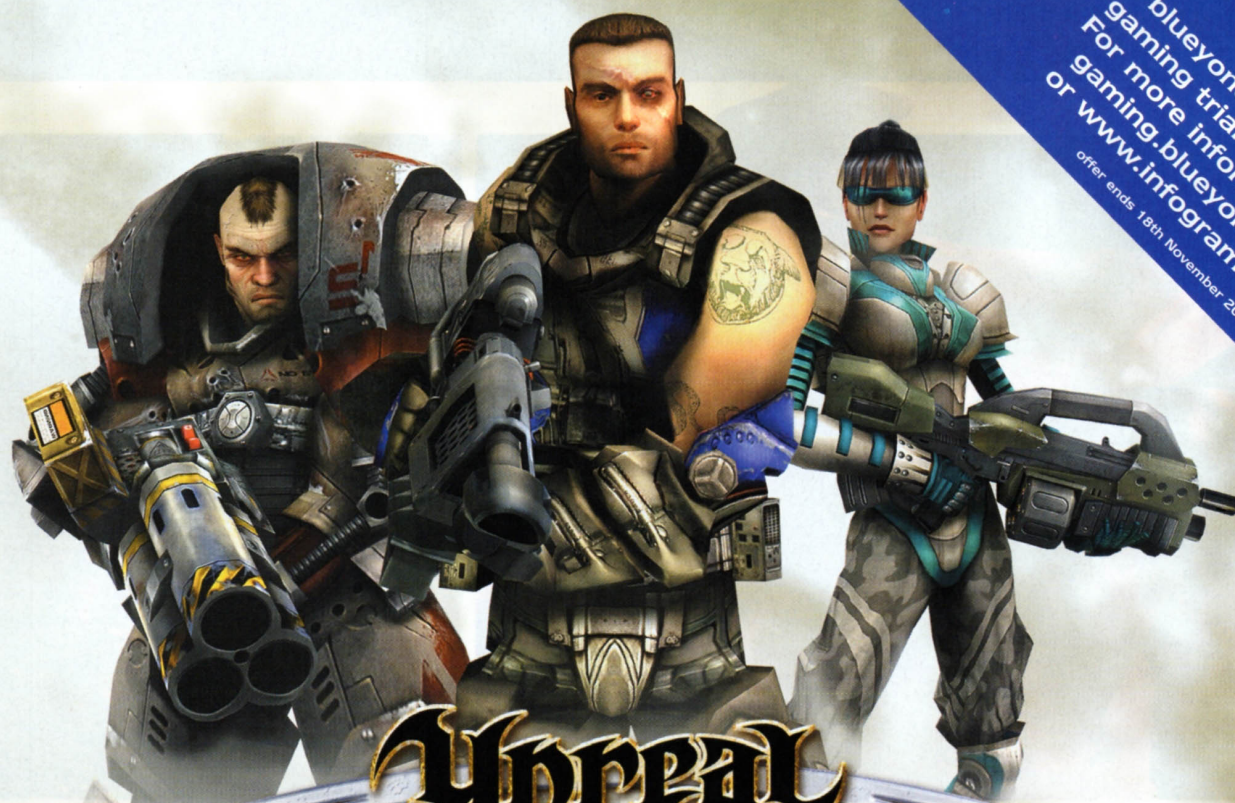
PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Massive gameworld
- ✓ Easy to play once you get into it
- ✓ Easygoing, almost casual gameplay
- ✗ Awful interface
- ✗ Difficult to navigate and find resources
- ✗ Basic graphics

52

Bugs and a clumsy interface mask a relatively entertaining game

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blueyonder multiplayer
gaming trial with this title.
For more information go to
gaming.blueyonder.co.uk
or www.infogrames.co.uk
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Unreal TOURNAMENT 2003

"A legend is about to return"

PC Zone

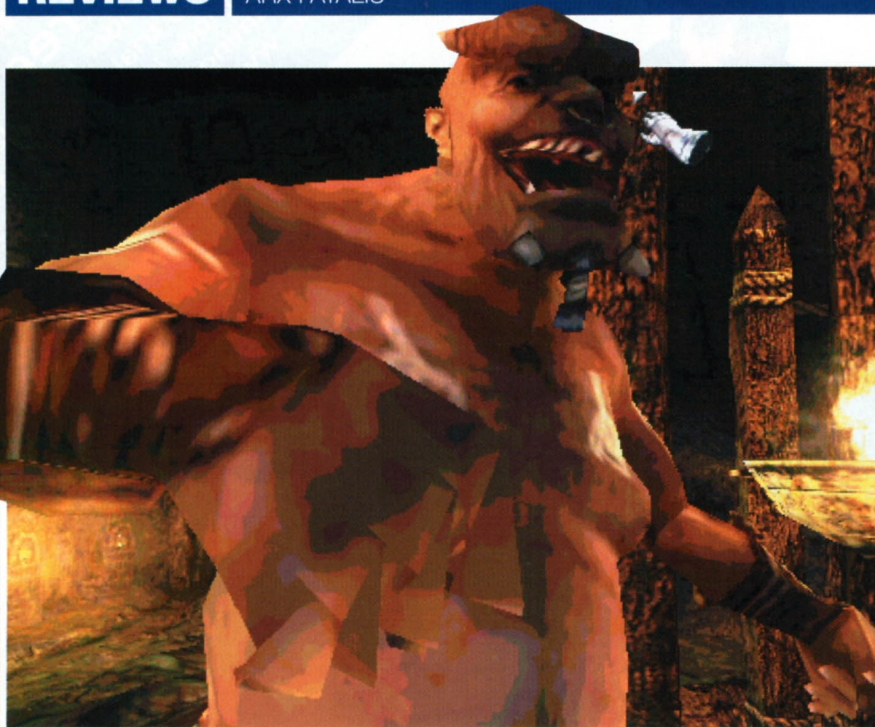


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Perhaps I shouldn't have hit him after all...



Cut-scenes are mainly short and to the point. Like this one.

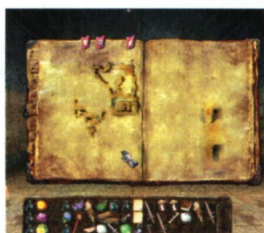
ARX FATALIS

■ £39.99 | Pub: JoWood | Dev: Arkane Studios | ETA: Out Now | www.arxfatalis-online.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 900, 256Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

It's *Ultima Underworld*, and it's not. Confused? So is Chris Anderson

AH... *Ultima Underworld*... what a game that was. It was technologically astounding at the time of its release, and incredibly it had depth of gameplay to match its technological ambitions. Its level design was breathtaking, the NPCs were intelligent and full of character and it was so atmospheric it had grown men quaking in their boots. It was a classic, and many predicted there would never be another game like it. They were wrong; there was another game that came out later that was just as good in every way. It was called, er, *Ultima Underworld 2*. So, the same people predicted there would never be another one like that one either. They were right, or were they? Let's take a look at



So it's a dungeon, and you're lost. Don't worry, here's a lovely map.

the latest contender for the *Ultima Underworld* crown: *Arx Fatalis*.

IN THE BEGINNING...

Yes, the beginning, always a good place to start we think, and *Arx Fatalis* starts as it means to go on, in a dank, dark underground environment with as little light as possible. There you are stuck in a prison cell with no obvious way out while guards march up and down outside your door (sound familiar? It should...) and so your first puzzle commences, as you search every nook and cranny of your cell for a means to escape. While it may be clichéd and trite, you won't be thinking

about that at this point. You'll be thinking about the graphics and how amazing they are. You'll forget you're in a dungeon that looks just like all the other dungeons you've seen in games of this type and instead you'll be staring at the guy in the cell next to you and marvelling at how incredibly detailed he is. You'll be looking at the torch in his cell and remarking on how uncannily lifelike it seems and your thoughts will race speedily ahead in anticipation of the graphic delights this beautiful game has in store for you.

Yes, that's right, even the walls are hugely detailed close up. *Arx Fatalis* then, is pretty high in the graphical detail department (*No shit? - Ed*), but it's also pretty high on keeping the action to a fairly pedestrian speed.

NO ALARMS AND NO SURPRISES

Arx Fatalis features some incredibly casual gameplay. There are no hit-and-run assaults, everything takes place at a leisurely pace from the moment you leave your cell right up to

the point where you enter the city of Arx itself and find out your destiny (or the game's idea of what your destiny should be). Rest assured though, it's not long after you enter the city that things start to heat up.

There's huge depth in terms of



As always, there are goblins. As always, whack 'em with a stick.

INPERSPECTIVE

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

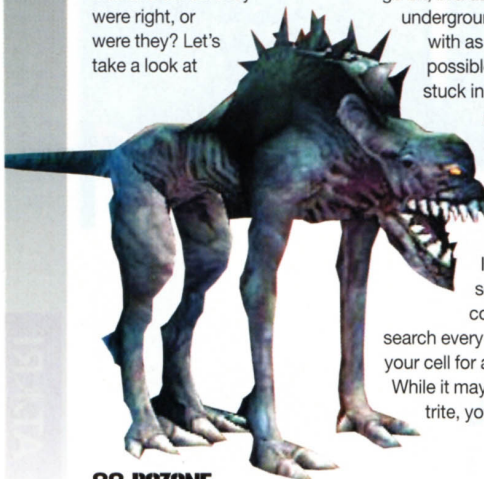
Reviewed Issue 118, Score 91%

If you're after an involving storyline and great character developments then look no further.

MORROWIND

Reviewed Issue 117, Score 94%

Arx Fatalis has atmosphere and excellent graphics. *Morrowind* has both these things and a whole lot more.





There are plenty of NPCs around, but they don't often have much to say for themselves.

exploration and masses to discover while wandering the lush landscape, with a multitude of NPCs to converse with (although some of them are somewhat reluctant to say anything of use) and some great plot twists to discover. In the early stages there seems to be little plot development, but with a little perseverance you'll soon uncover all kinds of sinister goings-on if you have the patience to wait that long. And believe me, you're going to want



This troll will be my friend if I give him a present. How sweet.

“With a little perseverance you’ll soon discover all kinds of sinister goings-on”

ARTIST AT WORK

SPELLS DON'T JUST CAST THEMSELVES YOU KNOW...



Draw runes on-screen with your mouse to cast spells.

Arx Fatalis' inventive spell system, is impressive to watch, and the novelty value is excellent. Finally role-playing purists can cast complex incantation spells that require more than just a simple click to release their inherent magic. It's a brilliant idea which moves away from the dull

single-click spellcasting so often adopted by RPGs. Why can't spell-combat be made more exciting in this way in more RPGs? It may take some getting used to, but it certainly immerses you into the game far more than most RPG spell systems. Developers, take note.

MURDER IN THE DARK

I'LL KILL IT... IF I CAN ONLY FIND IT...

Many of the areas in *Arx Fatalis* are pretty dark, what with it being mainly dungeon-based and all. This is a good thing, we love it. What we don't love is fumbling round in the dark trying to find what we're supposed to hit because our torch has gone out and we can't see the damn thing. It's particularly frustrating here, because you end up missing out on some stunning looking creatures in their full glory.



It wouldn't be an RPG without character stats. Like these.

to, as *Arx* is filled with exciting combat and tricky puzzles to keep you engrossed throughout.

The plot revolves around a demon called Akbaa who intends to return to *Arx* and make short work of it. Your intentions, as ever, are to prevent all this nonsense and save *Arx* from the *Fatalis* of the title.

GREAT COMBINATIONS

Items you attain during your travels can be combined to create unique new ones, much like in *Diablo II*. Working out how to successfully link the runes you learn on your travels

in order to make useful spells is one of *Arx*'s most compelling features. Spellcasting itself involves tracing these runes on screen with your mouse, much like in *Black & White*, which makes spell-combat particularly tense, especially when confronted with some of the more powerful nasties you stumble across later on.

Sadly though, *Arx Fatalis* is no *Ultima Underworld*. The somewhat limited character development and NPC interaction and simplistic melee combat (see enemy, click mouse) let it down somewhat. Where it scores highly is in its fantastic graphics, believable and realistic environments, brilliant spellcasting system and eerily atmospheric presentation. If, you're after a solid dungeon crawl that oozes atmosphere, *Arx Fatalis* is more than worthy of your time. **PCZ**



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Inventive spell system
- ✓ Excellent graphics
- ✓ Highly detailed NPCs
- ✗ Linear gameplay for the most part
- ✗ Camera often seems to have a mind of its own
- ✗ Clichéd dialogue

83

Beautiful and atmospheric

TAZ: WANTED

■ £24.99 | Pub: Infogrames | Dev: Freemind | ETA: Sep 27

REQUIRES PIII 500, 32Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 700, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Rrowl. Gnash. Woarrh. Spit. Fillrrbb. Yes, it's another Looney Tunes puzzle game review by James Lyon

I'LL GIVE it this at least, they're certainly getting better at bastardising the 2D Looney Tunes universe into cel-shaded 3D. Now all they need to do is pour some authenticity into the format so that it doesn't look like the ill-fittingly modernised franchise leeching where it obviously is. Which leads us on to asking the question, is there a decent platform game hiding behind the *Taz: Wanted* name?

On a superficial level, yes, it's competently put together. It's colourful, it looks busy, and there are no major faults. Yet play for a while and you get the feeling that it lacks a certain finesse. You have to knock out seven targets on each of ten worlds, and there's a degree of variety in getting at each one, but most of it seems to involve blindly travelling from one area to another until you chance on the

solutions. Finding bonus items and cash in each level add to the obsessive collector conformity of the genre (in order to unlock gallery pages. Coo, eh?). And that's your lot.

It looks frayed around the edges in comparison to the greats. Imitating instead of innovating. Springboards, slippery surfaces, wobbly logs, timed jumps, it's all there. It's easy to concede that you can play through *Taz* once over and get what you paid for. Just don't expect much more from it.

Oh, and in case you think I've forgotten, the camera sometimes gets stuck behind scenery. Fancy that.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

66

Taz: Wanted to star in a better game than this



Sand in his fur must be murder.



Break stuff. Make money.



The battles may look fairly grand, but are actually pretty uninspired affairs.

LEGION

■ £19.99 | Pub: Koch Media | Dev: Paradox Entertainment | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES P233 MMX, 64Mb RAM and a 2Mb graphics card

DESIRES PIII 400 and an 8Mb 3D card

Civilisation meets Age Of Empires? Hmm, no, not really says Chris Anderson

TAKE *Civilization*, strip it clean of its depth and complexity. Then take *Age Of Empires 2* and simplify the combat to a degree where you don't actually have to do anything at all, and what you are left with is *Legion*, well more or less. *Legion* takes you through the glory days of the Roman Empire and tasks you with leading the Romans through famous victories, or guiding their opponents to bring their downfall. It's a sound enough premise for a strategy game, and it may even have worked had the developers put any thought whatsoever into the inner workings of their game.

Turn-based city building and very minor resource management issues provide the backbone of the gameplay, with real-time combat coming into play whenever your armies come

across enemy units on the map. The simplicity of the turn-based section of the game could have been forgiven if the real-time battles were anything to write home about, but sadly, the combat is simply a matter of going through the motions. Choose a formation, click the start button and sit back and watch the computer play the fight out while you twiddle your thumbs. Graphically, as you can see from the screenshots, it looks like the game that time forgot, but as always, it's gameplay that really matters, and in that department *Legion* simply doesn't deliver on any level.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

25

Unfortunately it's as bad as it looks



The caped crusader ready for action

BATMAN: VENGEANCE

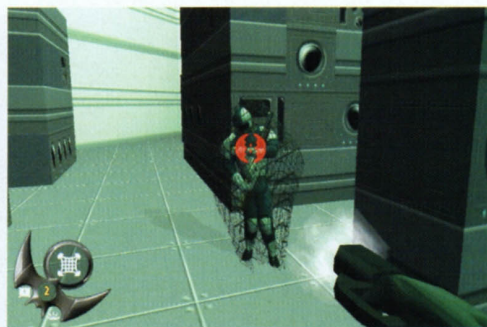
■ £19.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Ubi Soft | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 450, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb video card DESIRES PIII 600 and 128Mb RAM

Once again **James Lyon** puts on his review cape and soars into the night for another comic book inspired arcade game



Challenge the enemy to a frenzied dance-off (lie).



Levels are crude but functional.

EVIDENTLY it's all too easy to complain when a game has an unworkable camera control system, but that doesn't mean you should just take it away. Especially not if it means *Batman* running madly through rooms unable to see where things are because of a forced lack of forward vision like he does here. What were they thinking?

That said, it can be corrected. You can refocus the viewpoint behind you by switching into first-person mode and switching back out again. Which is hardly suitable in frenetic action situations. As for the first-person mode, it's adequately controllable. Except it's a mode that only encompasses half of your abilities and requires the

hassle of switching back and forth between viewpoints to access the rest of your abilities.

Batman Vengeance seems to consist mostly of a pulp of sub-par bash-on-the-keys beat 'em up sequences and simple puzzles. The plot adheres quite well to the generally excellent noirish Warner Brothers cartoon and its gothic anime stylings. It's

just the bland, sterile action inbetween that's the problem. *Batman*, as a concept, exudes atmosphere and comic book effervescence. As a game, the levels are muted by a committed emptiness. A variety of sub games (recalling the decent 8/16-bit movie tie-ins by Ocean) try to give it substance, although they don't gel with the dull on-foot

sections. The fact that it tries to imitate games such as *Metal Gear Solid* and fails doesn't help matters. Horribly trite, unfair and nowhere near excellent.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

42

Joel Schumacher rather than Tim Burton

SHADOW FLARE

■ £29.99 | Pub: Emurasoft | Dev: Denyusha | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 450, 128Mb and a 4Mb 3D card DESIRES PIII 500, 128Mb and a 16Mb 3D card

James Lyon once bought a pair of Hank Marvin's trousers. No, wait, they were Shadows flares. Sigh. Here's an RPG review



Spells are weedy and unimpressive.



He's worth a thousand quid.



The whole world respawns if you quit.

YOU MUST be *Diablo* and I claim my five pounds. Well it might as well be. Confused? Let me explain. If we were playing 20 questions and you asked: Is it an RPG? Do you play in a low resolution? Has it got a minimal storyline? Is it full of repetitive mouse clicking? Do you battle relentless hordes? Do you start out in a small town? Do you wander around fields and dungeons completing simple missions? Do you slowly level up your stats? And do you gain an ever more powerful supply of weapons? Can you also cast

magic? Do you constantly have to unload your inventory in order to pick up everything? Do you carry on this cycle until the end?

And if I nodded yes, you'd have jumped up and shouted *Diablo*. And I'd have shaken my head and said no. But if you'd asked more questions: Does it do nothing to improve on *Diablo*? Have these people never played *Diablo 2*? Or *Dungeon Siege*? Are the levels so unimaginative that they all look the same? Have they mostly done nothing but change the colour palette for the enemies as they get harder? Is

there little variation between the look of weapons? Do you keep having to identify the potentially useful weapons with a merchant despite having done so hundreds of times before? Is it ridiculously tough? Is it a boring repetitious mess of unoriginality not worth dragging yourself through?

Then you'd have lost. That was over 20 questions. Ah well.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

28

No innovation, no fun and no point

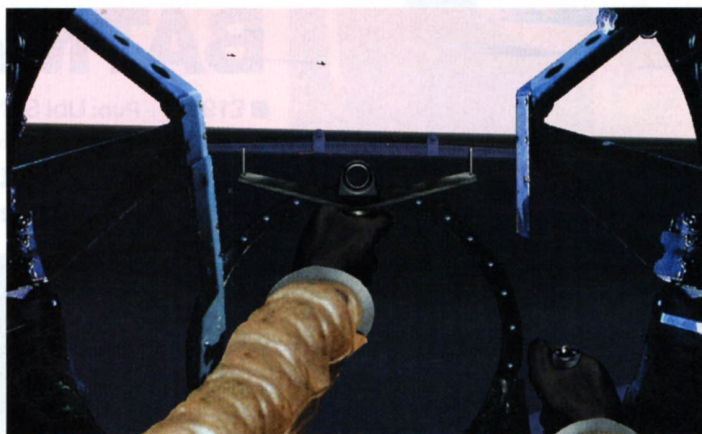


Look familiar?

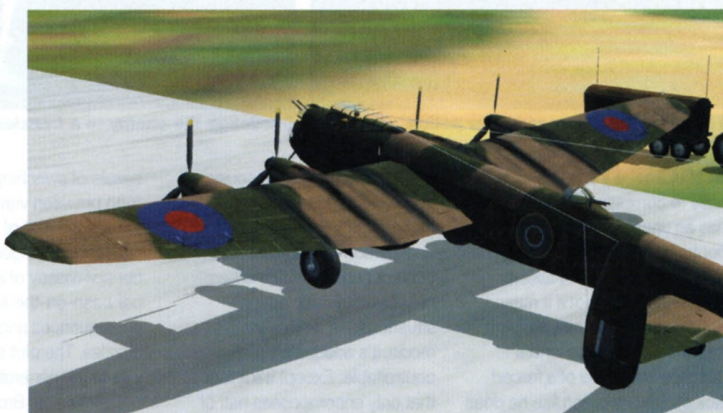
Silent as a whisper

REVIEWS

THE DAMBUSTERS



A sophisticated bit of kit.



The famous Lancaster bomber. Just so you know what it is when your granddad starts to go off on one.

THE DAMBUSTERS

■ £24.99 | Pub: Just Flight | Dev: Blue Arrow FS |
ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 300, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

DESIRES PIII 450 and 128Mb RAM will make things much smoother

REQUIRES ORIGINAL
**MICROSOFT
COMBAT
FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2**

Paul Presley's got his cabbage crates over the briny and a half decent add-on pack The dirty devil

PERCEIVED wisdom has it that reviewing a flight sim add-on is as pointless as evaluating a porn star by the colour of her nail polish. It's only relevant to the foot fetishists in the crowd, and they'll already have their preferred colour choices. If a flight sim fan wants extra liveries for his 747s, he's going to buy the '747 Extra Liveries Kit'. Simple.

The Dambusters is a little different though. Unlike the simple Gmax cut-and-paste jobs that most flight sim add-on packs are made from, this has had some serious time spent on it in the development labs. A tribute to the brave men of the 617 Squadron of RAF Bomber Command, this takes the basic *Combat Flight Sim 2* engine and transforms it into a dedicated WWII bombing simulator.

We're not talking a radical departure here. Bottom line is that you get 25 missions utilising the existing engine –

inherent flaws and all in the case of *CFS2*. You get a couple of RAF bases, some very detailed models of the Lancaster, Mosquito and Wellington aircraft to fly in either *CFS2* or *Flight Sim 2000/2002*, and naturally you get the bouncing bomb to drop on several German goalkeeping guards. (Carling Black Label, anyone?)

And it's all done extremely well. I'm in no way saying you should rush out and buy a copy of *CFS2* just to play *The Dambusters*, but existing owners looking for a near-authentic recreation of Guy Gibson's wartime exploits won't be disappointed with the efforts Just Flight has gone to. Which bodes well for their future stand-alone sims.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

78

Bally good show chaps



PC CD-ROM



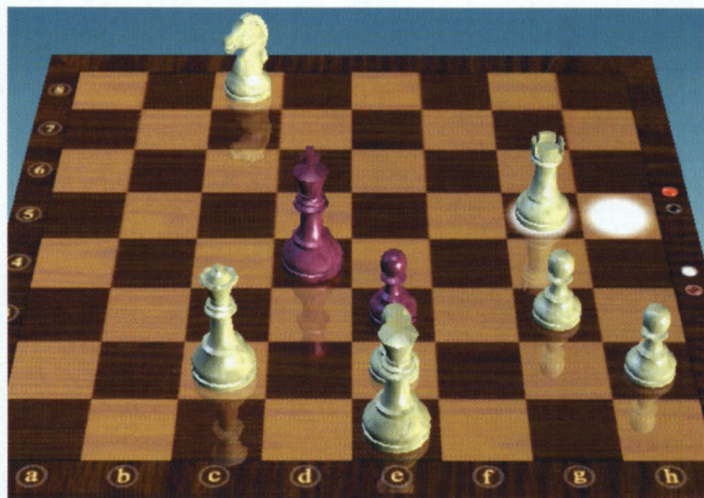
CHESSMASTER 9000

■ £19.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 450, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb video card

DESIRES PIII 1GHz, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb video card

Dave Woods may be a bit of a queen but does he have any chance of becoming a master?



The time Korda nearly beat Woods only to be foiled by the dreaded stalemate.



The tutorials are probably the only real reason to buy the game.

MARTIN KORDA thinks that *Medieval: Total War* is the pinnacle of strategy games on the PC, but he seems to be forgetting the granddaddy, the ultimate strategy fest, and the game that takes minutes to learn and several hundred lifetimes to master – kids today, don't know they're born. This is the definitive PC version and the *Chessmaster* series has been around since Korda was in shorts, but with AI that was going to challenge all but the elite in the game in place years ago, the only new features in 9000 are cosmetic, and even these are few and far between.

Unforgivably, it still has the same archaic interface that makes getting into a game or selecting a board that's actually useable the equivalent of pitting your wits against a grandmaster. I suppose that when you're capable of thinking 127 moves ahead, juggling an infinite amount of moves in your head and struggling with deeply paranoid thoughts about communists and whether your opponent's playing footsie with you under the table, coding

a few buttons and a front-end of the game that are intuitive to human beings is a bizarre concept.

Aside from new spinny-rotatey boards the additions to *Chessmaster 9000* consist of a course on the Psychology of Competition by International Master Josh Waitzkin (as boring as it sounds), a new Endgame Quiz from five times chess champ and Grand Master Larry Evans, and a new blunder alert feature that tells you when you've made a complete arse of yourself. Online and LAN options are still here, and, well that's about it. It's chess. It's not worth buying if you've got 8000 (although it's probably worth a punt if you're still playing the original from 1986) but a bargain if you want to improve your game or play people across the Internet while wearing lady's underwear. Whatever rocks your boat.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

72


Check but not mate

Deadly as a blade



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**THE FACE
OF THE
ENEMY**

IRONSTORM

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PC
CD-ROM

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CELTIC KINGS: RAGE OF WAR

£29.99 | Pub: Wanadoo | Dev: Haemimont Games | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 400, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card DESIRES PIII 500 and a 16Mb 3D card

Steve O'Hagan is 'peasantly' surprised by this historical RTS



It may not look great...



...but it's surprisingly addictive.

SET during the Roman invasion of Gaul, *Celtic Kings* boasts two game modes: the first, campaign, is your standard RTS fight-some-battles scenario. The second is adventure mode, where you and a handful of other faithful comrades wander the lands completing quests.

You can play as either the Romans or the Gauls, with the

mysterious Druids and the rampaging Teutons occasionally showing their faces. When played as an RTS, *Celtic Kings* gets lost among the crowd of fantasy/historical titles already out there, with its simplified economics and derivative gameplay. But when played in adventure mode, it proves to be surprisingly addictive.

In this mode missions can vary from solo explorations with you fighting off wolves and brigands, to leading sieges on enemy forts and meeting in the field for full-scale battles. Troops can be arranged into formations by your heroes for greater tactical control. Druids and priests can summon magic through self sacrifice in another



Carve your initials into the stone before the cops show up.

of the game's nice touches. And your hero and his followers earn experience and improved fighting abilities along the way.

Celtic Kings' main downfall is the recent appearance of the likes of *Battle Realms* and *Warcraft III*, which have upped the stakes. It can't quite match *Warcraft's* visual delights and epic scale or the innovative hero

system of *Battle Realms*. Nevertheless, CK is worth investigating for its adventure mode if you were a big *Diablo* fan, or never grew out of *Asterix*.

PCZONE VERDICT 70

Better than we expected

THE SIMS UNLEASHED

£19.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: Maxis | ETA: October 4

REQUIRES P200, 64Mb RAM, an 8Mb 3D Card and the original version of *The Sims* DESIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

Mark Hill is on holiday, so this Sims honour falls to Rhianna Pratchett

REQUIRES ORIGINAL THE SIMS



You can now buy pets, collars and toys, but unfortunately you can't buy portable landmines to blow them up.



Unleashed offers more than the previous efforts.

FIRSTLY let me just say that unlike Mr Hill I'm not bored of *The Sims*, but then I haven't had the dubious pleasure of reviewing the original game and the four expansion packs. While previous add-ons concentrated on introducing new social features to the original, *Unleashed* introduces a new element – pets.

Yes, not content with a big-screen TV and a hot tub, your

warbling Sims will be able to go out and purchase themselves a furry creature or two just so the kids have something to tread on, drop, dress up and generally abuse. Not only can you get the standard cats, dogs and goldfish, but also more exotic creatures such as turtles and iguanas.

There's a few nice touches in your pets behaviour like the fact they can eat each other, or their strange habit of coming and

watching you in the shower. Unfortunately they don't strategically drag live power leads into that puddle they've just made outside the shower – this is the squeaky clean *Sims* after all.

As far as *Sims* expansion packs go this is definitely the heftiest of them all. Aside from pets, *Unleashed* also introduces a bit of therapeutic gardening and 30 all new

residential and community lots, 125 new items and five new career paths. Let's face it, most of you reading this probably loathe *The Sims*, and the silent millions who keep buying them are probably more likely to prefer *Xtreme Cross-stitch Monthly* to *PC ZONE*.

I know this much about *Unleashed*, a) it will sell millions b) it will stay in the charts much longer than it ever

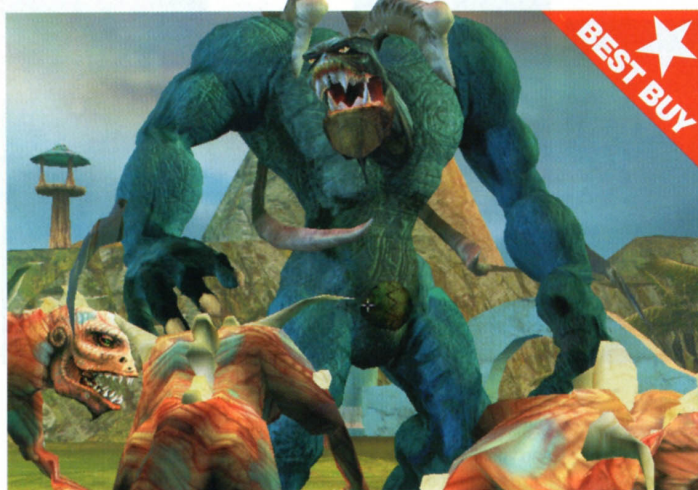
deserves to stay there, pretty much like the other *Sims* games really. Unlike some of the other expansion packs though, *Unleashed* has a touch of the innovative spark of the original game.

PCZONE VERDICT 78

The best expansion so far

REPLAY

The place to go when you're low on dough



Looks like a sensitive type of lad.

GIANTS CITIZEN KABUTO

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

3D ACTION/strategy has never taken off quite like it should have. Which is strange, considering it melds two of the finest and most popular genres on the PC into one complete package. *Citizen Kabuto* is to this day, still one of the finest examples of the genre that your money can buy, and at a mere £4.99, you're not going to need much of it to be able to afford a copy. And afford a copy you must.

The general premise of the somewhat surreal story is this. A bunch of water-dwelling naked chicks, called Reapers, with paranoid delusions of alien invasions create a 50ft psychopathic killer called Kabuto to defend them from what they believe is an impending extra-terrestrial attack. After hitting puberty and stumbling across a copy of the *Sunday Sport*, he realises eating sheep isn't the only pleasure in life, but after failing to find a page three model his own size, takes out his sexual frustrations on his creators

instead by wiping them out. Well it's something like that anyway.

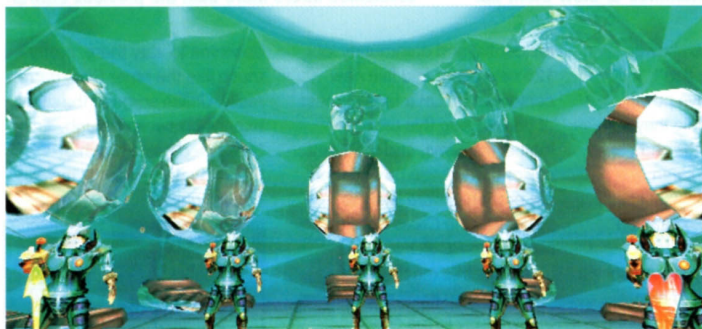
You can play as one of three characters (magical but physically weak Reapers, well-armed space marines or the gargantuan Kabuto) through a set of compelling missions, fighting your way through a mythical world and watching the excellent story unfold as you progress. The combat is thrilling and even though the strategy side pales somewhat in comparison, it's accessible enough not to scare non-RTS players away.

The huge diversity of the characters as well as some superb multiplayer options make for plenty of replayability. Don't listen to me though, go and find out for yourself. Five quid. Come on, stop being a cheapskate and have some fun for a change.

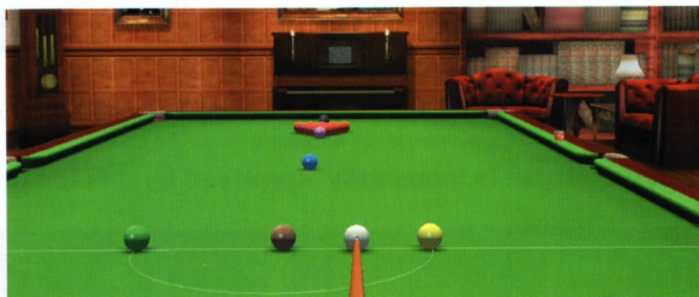
Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT

85



The Gladiators contestants didn't quite fathom the rules of Atlaspheres.



Snooker isn't the only game, you can also play pool, billiards or even darts.

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL WORLD

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

HIS TROPHY cabinet may have gathered more dust than Pompeii, but Jimmy White resolutely remains 'The People's Champion,' even at the venerable age of 40. As such, he maintains a reasonable sideline in endorsements, and this is the latest product of his long-running relationship with veteran developer Archer MacLean.

You'd think the genre would have blown itself out by now, but *Cueball World* takes it to extremes by throwing in an array of exotic locales in which to dabble with the green baize. So if you've ever fancied chalking your cue amid the deserted ruins of Angkor Wat or Stonehenge at night, then this is the game for you, with other

locations including a desert island, a boat moored in Hong Kong harbour, and even the innards of a PC.

Very strange indeed, but the main thing is that the basic game is sound, offering an adequate take on snooker, billiards and pool (which Reality Check readers may recall is not exactly Jimmy's forte, given that he lost to my good self). There are also a host of largely pointless mini-games thrown in, all of which are overshadowed by the sublime darts game, which for less than a fiver is worth the admission fee alone.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

76

DISC WORLD NOIR

■ £9.99 | Pub: Infogrames | ETA: Out Now



Discworld Noir has smokey bars and femme fatales aplenty.

REMEMBER point-and-click adventures? The games where you progress from one pre-rendered location to another, pointing and clicking at items and characters to interact with them? While they may be the very embodiment of gaming purgatory for many, they do have a certain cerebral charm, making for intricate puzzles and long, involved conversations. And in *Discworld Noir*, we have something nearing the apex of the genre.

Set in the city of Ankh-Morpork and based on the *Discworld* novels, *Noir* is Terry Pratchett's world as seen in a 1950s American detective story, full of smokey bars, lounge-jazz, femme fatales and no-good hoodlums. You are Lewton, an ex-cop PI with a drinking problem and women troubles, of course.

The city is full of imaginative locations, which are bristling with animations and characters. The dark alleyways, rain-soaked sidewalks and dreary drinking haunts are populated by a motley crew of down-at-heel vampires, slow-witted troll heavies and scheming dwarves, all full of witty conversation and bizarre life stories. The puzzles are intriguing and challenging, and the use of extensive clues mean you have to think rather than adopt the 'click on everything you see until something happens' approach – how it should be.

We still think it's great, but accept it has a niche appeal, strictly for the gamer who likes a slow-burning intellectual challenge. And of course the million or so who read the eminent Mr Pratchett's novels.

Steve O'Hagan

PCZONE VERDICT

82

RAYMAN M

■ £9.99 | Pub: Focus Multimedia | ETA: Out Now



While it's colourful to look at, *Rayman M*'s gameplay soon becomes dull.

SO, RAYMAN and friends get together for a fun-filled racing romp that's only saved from being called 'Rayman Kart' by the improbable detail that there are in fact no racing karts in it. Instead, the racing is strictly pedestrian (in both senses of the word), resulting in a melange of run, slide, swing and climb-based multiplayer insanity in which the spirit of Mario flickers only faintly.

There's certainly no faulting the exuberant candy-cane graphics on display in *Rayman M*, but I think I must have been feeling a bit over-generous when I reviewed it the first time round. Sure, it was enjoyable for a while with its



multi-level shortcut-laden courses and varied terrain, but 20 quid was way too much to ask for what is little more than a weekend's worth of entertainment. The new asking price of a tenner is much closer to the mark, though there's still not a great deal to recommend this game over its competitors. Luckily though, it has none – or at least very few – as the cartoon-racing genre is practically non-existent on the PC, so it may still be worth a look if you're too proud to dust off your SNES for a game of *Super Mario Kart*.

Anthony Holden

PCZONE VERDICT 55

BATTLE REALMS

■ £9.99 | Pub: Focus Multimedia | ETA: Out Now

NOW WHY didn't you all buy this game? Shame on you. One of the finest RTS games of the year and most of you just turned your noses up at it. Why? Was it the fact that it was groundbreaking – an attempt to take isometric 2D RTS to a new, deeper level – that scared you off? Did you hide in the corner, bawling with fear like a two-year-old who's just seen a dead rat at



The attention to detail in *Battle Realms* is stunning.

the sheer depth of it? Or maybe it was the stunning attention to detail, with its superbly animated units, which actually looked like they were fighting rather than just clouting each other randomly around the head. Or the fact that you actually had to think about upgrading units, sending them off to various types of training schools to create the types of warriors you wanted, rather than the ones you're told you can by constricting game-mechanics?

Remember, the brains behind this was one of the leading lights of the first few C&C games. He wanted to take the genre to new, more interesting levels and most of you shunned his vision. He wanted you to think about your tactics, by using the terrain to your advantage and manage your small groups of troops so that you'd never just build and rush into an enemy base, over and over and over again like in most other games of this ilk. If you missed out when it was first released, don't make the same mistake now. You'll regret it if you do.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT 85

SACRIFICE

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

NO CRAP Elton John song lyric tie-ins here, I promise. Believe me, it's no sacrifice on my part for not alluding to that bloody song in this review like every single reviewer on the planet seemed to do when it first appeared. Shift! Never mind, just a slip up. It won't happen again.

Sacrifice, the game, not the song, wasn't quite the hit we all hoped and expected it to be. Even though it's one of the most stunning looking action/strategy games around, it sadly loses the plot when it comes to gameplay, which, some might argue, kind of lets it down. The original thrill of running around a colourful alien world, casting spells and ordering your sidekicks to kick the faeces out the enemy fades faster than passion after a honeymoon. A confusing and clumsy interface doesn't help much either, and considering the action is pretty pacy, this really is an oversight.

However, the plot is superb, the multiplayer options varied, and as a quick 30-minute-a-day blaster, *Sacrifice* does prove excellent entertainment,



Looks great but is sadly lacking in the gameplay department.

especially at this bargain price. The developers may have thought that we had a cold, cold heart when we only gave this 62 per cent first time round, but all I can say is, some things look better just passing through, and *Sacrifice* is sadly one of those things. Can someone please shoot me now?

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT 68

LEFTOVERS

PLEASE SIR CAN I HAVE SOME MORE SIR?

Lots to get through this month, so let's just get down to it shall we? *Fallout* (£4.99, Sold Out), is a timeless classic RPG, which even though it's pretty darn ugly, is full of compelling gameplay and features a superb storyline. Non-nostalgics need not apply though (68 per cent). *Kao The Kangaroo* (£4.99, Sold Out), is not, as the press release claims, a platformer with 'incredible playability', but rather a substandard cutesy platformer with an incredible lack of ideas (40 per cent). Also from Sold Out and at the same price as the above two is *Original War*. Dull graphics, standard RTS gameplay and little originality means an unexceptional score of 60 per cent.

Focus Multimedia release three compilation packs, all at £9.99, none of which are up to much, as all the games involved are incredibly dated. *Delta Force* (ancient tactical shooter) and *Armored Fist* (a very old tank game) make up the first one, 55 per cent, the second one comprises of *Delta Force 2* (slightly less ancient tactical shooter) and *F22 Raptor* (archaic combat flight sim about F22 Raptors), 68 per cent, and finally *Mig29 Fulcrum* (older than my gran) and *F22 Raptor* (archaic combat flight sim about F22 Raptors), 47 per cent.

To wrap things up we've got *Supreme Snowboarding* (Infogrames, £9.99), which, before the arrival of *Tony Hawk's 2* and *3*, was the best extreme sports game on the PC, and to this day remains well worth your time and money (80 per cent).

Martin Korda



Delta Force



Original War



Supreme Snowboarding

UPDATES

A place for single-player redemption and multiplayer action

MULTIPLE CHANCES

What's all this about then?

Some PC games are exceptionally flaky on release, with bugs and omissions that are subsequently fixed over time with patches. When this happens we'll take another look and see if the score is worth upping. By the same token, massively multiplayer games are ever-evolving and because of this we'll be revisiting major releases to see what's changed over time.

This is also the place where we take a proper look at the multiplayer side of games. As we regularly review games before they go on sale, often there are no public servers up and running, so instead of telling you how we think the game is going to play we'll wait and do a proper multiplayer review here, outlining how many servers are up and how the game plays online.

"As sequels go, Medieval is every bit as engrossing and enduring as its predecessor"

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

■ £39.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Creative Assembly | ETA: Out Now | www.totalwar.com | Players 2-4 (2-8 LAN)

REQUIRES PIII 750, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and a 56K modem DESIRES P4 1Ghz, 128Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card and an ADSL Internet connection

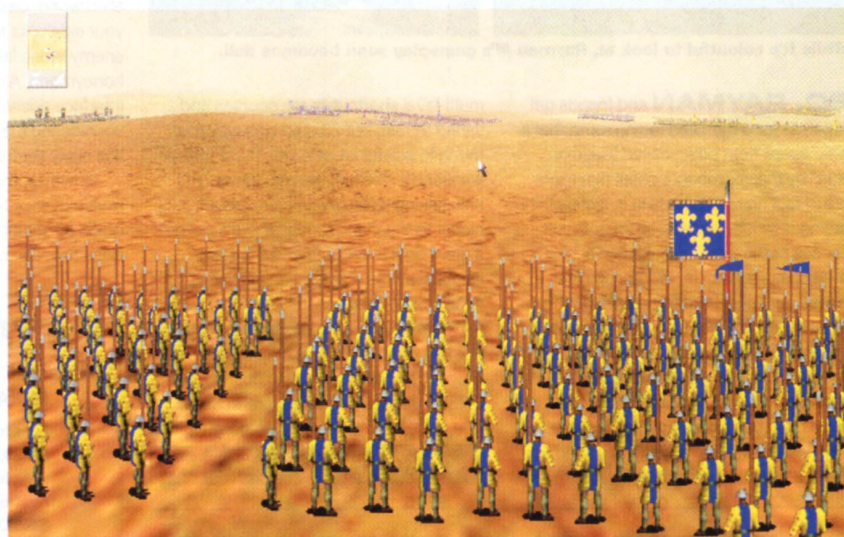
Even when you're top of the class you can still try harder, not that *Richie Shoemaker* would know anything about that

MULTIPLAYER

AFTER A successful tour of the Far East the *Total War* bandwagon has finally landed on European shores, bringing with it its grand mix of epic real-time tactics and exhaustive turn-based strategy. As sequels go, *Medieval: Total War* is every bit as engrossing and enduring as its predecessor, adding plenty of new features to warrant the awards that have been lavished upon it, yet retaining all that was good and wholesome from the classic original. Yet it's when you play the multiplayer game you realise that underneath the surface, apart from a whole lot more of everything (more than 300 multiplayer maps for example), *Total War's* multiplayer advance from East to West isn't quite as sweeping as the single-player game might suggest.

TAKE NO RISKS

By far the most conspicuous entry missing from the multiplayer menu is the online campaign – not that the developers ever promised one, but it will be a massive disappointment to many fans that they can't engage in online turn-based strategy in the same way that they can in real-time



Originally it was intended that *Shogun* might eventually enjoy some sort of online campaign option, but due to some technical limitations – we imagine – the idea was eventually dropped.

battles. What you get are the exact same multiplayer gameplay options as *Shogun*, namely single and ultimately meaningless battles where each player spends however many florins they've been allocated on troops and equipment and then marches them off to the battlefield to see if they've purchased wisely. Of course, as with the single-player game

there are castles and some serious hardware to knock them down with – and great fun they are too – but the siege battles aside, *Medieval's* multiplayer game really isn't that much different to *Shogun's*.

HAVE CAKE, WILL EAT

That's not to say *Medieval's* online game should be avoided, far from it. Three or four-player

battles are especially entertaining, particularly when there is a lack of co-ordination between allies and they turn on each other, as is so often the case. In many ways *Medieval* is just as enjoyable online as off, yet as a big fan of the *Total War* series, it's hard not to be a little disappointed at not being able to play any of the game's turn-based offerings online against the likes of Martin Korda after having beaten him so comprehensively on the field of battle (*In your dreams Shoemaker – Martin*). As the name suggests *Total War* is about more than one's prowess on the battlefield and as such, in multiplayer *Total War* turns out to be anything but. [M]



'This is supposed to be a happy occasion. Let's not bicker and argue about who killed who.'



PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 120) **90**
MULTIPLAYER SCORE **78**

There's something missing

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THE CONTENDERS

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS DELUXE

ISSUE 115 – 86%



IL-2 STURMOVIK

ISSUE 110 – 90%



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

ISSUE 112 – 88%



COMMANDOS 2

ISSUE 108 – 91%



MEDAL OF HONOR

ISSUE 112 – 94%



SUDDEN STRIKE II

ISSUE 120 – 72%



THE JURY

**BRIGADIER
RICHIE
SHOEMAKER**



**CAPTAIN
STEVE
HILL**



**GENERAL
PAUL
PRESLEY**



**UBERGRAPPEN-
FUEHRER
DAN EMERY**



**FIELD
MARSHALL
MARK HILL**



WORLD WAR II SUPERTEST

PC ZONE takes to the beaches, expecting sun, sea and sangria, but finds a bloody war instead. Mark Hill leads the charge

FOR YEARS

World War II has been a favourite subject of game developers the world over, but rarely has the conflict generated so many quality titles as we have seen in the past 12 months. In an effort to find out which one of these gems depicts the sheer terror and brutality of one of the bloodiest conflicts in human history the most enjoyably, we decided to assemble a panel of battle-hardened veterans (game veterans that is) and lock them in a nuclear bunker until they decided on a winner. The debates raged and blood was nearly drawn, but in the end there was only one clear winner: read on to find out who came out the victor. Let battle commence.

Richie: I was a big WWII fan, but I'm getting sick of it now. There are too many games coming out.

Mark: The trend seems to be towards less realism now.

Richie: You don't get the sims any more. *Panzer General* and all that shit.

Dan: That's not shit...

Steve: We've moved on from hexes.

Dan: Only graphically, the principle still exists.

Mark: Even *Battlefield 1942*, which has every vehicle you could think of, is arcadey. People wouldn't touch it otherwise. You don't want to go into a plane and have the game turn into a flight sim.

Richie: That's what *World War II Online* is like. It's awful.

Steve: But are we judging these games on how well they recreate the war best? We'd have to ask my grandfather.

Mark: We should judge them on how well they convey that WWII comicbook, adventure film feel.

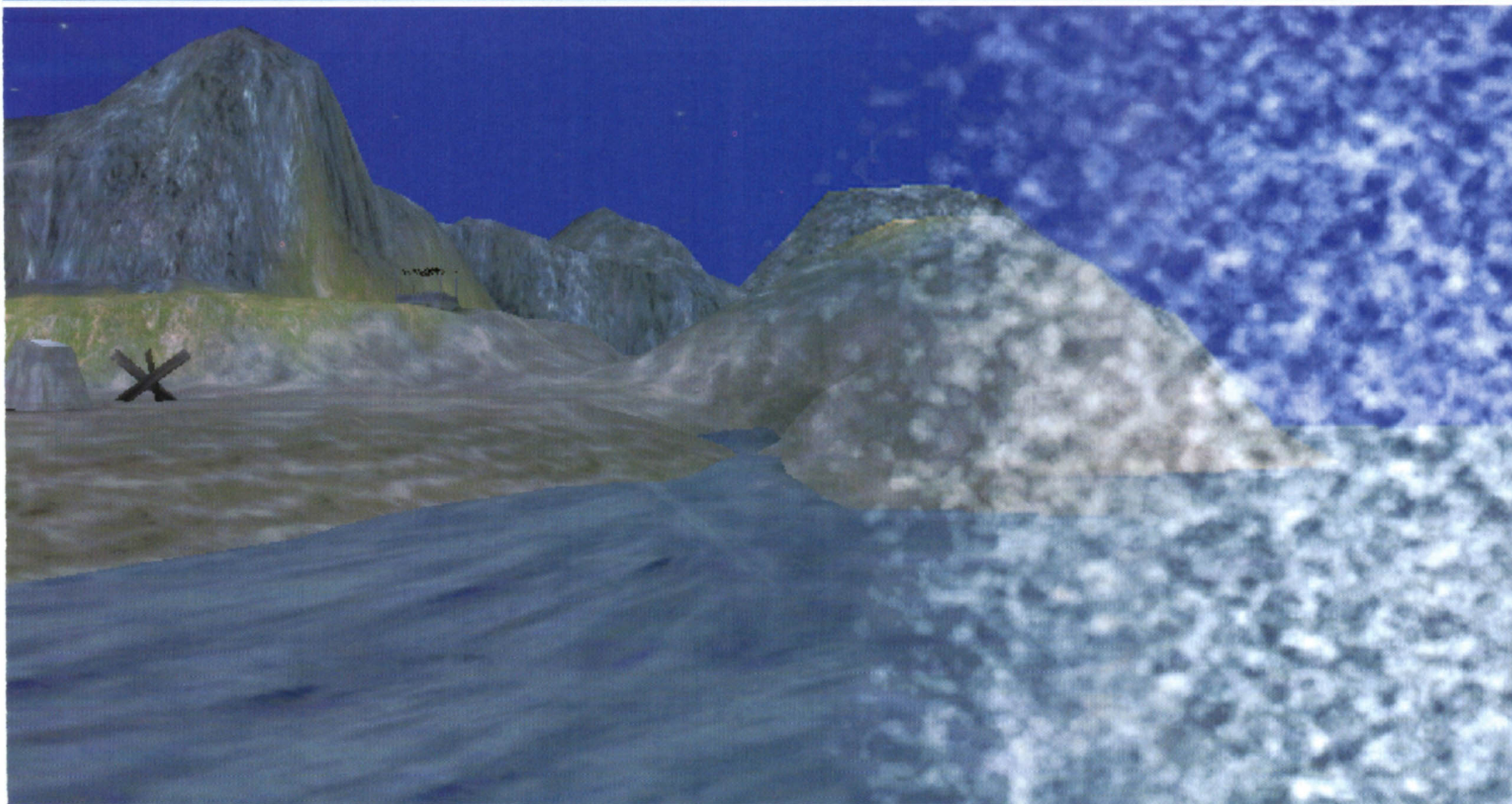
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Mark: It's by far the oldest game here, but it's been re-released



Even in its Deluxe incarnation, *Hidden & Dangerous* is showing its age. Damn fine game though.





recently with updated graphics. And they've finally fixed the bugs. But is it still worth playing now?

Richie: No. Well, yes and no.

Mark: I still think it's really good.

Paul: I couldn't get into it this time.

Mark: Well the problem when it first came out – and it seems more obvious now – is that it's really hard work.

Steve: I just treated it like a first-person shooter. It doesn't really give you that WWII feeling. I forgot that it was set during the war at one stage.

Mark: You do get that feeling in later levels.

Paul: It does a lot of good WWII set pieces

Richie: But they should have made it in black & white. This version could have been like the Director's Cut.

Steve: Just turn the colour down on your monitor. But you know, the war was fought in colour.

Mark: It's still very hard. A bit like *Commandos* in 3D. You figure out how to get past one bit, die further on, figure out how to get past that...

Richie: I couldn't face playing through all the missions again. But WWII for us is all about the comics and the films and it does recreate that.

Steve: Yeah, you really don't want the real war, where you spend 24 hours hiding in a ditch.

IL-2 STURMOVIK

Steve: For a flight sim it's alright.

But whenever you get into trouble you just hit autopilot, which is a bit of a cop out.

Mark: I like that screen where you can turn off all the realism switches at the beginning. Let the hardcore pilots keep them on, but I don't go anywhere without invulnerability.

Dan: It is the best flight sim

ever. Hands down.

Steve: Getting the thing off the ground is a struggle for us laymen, better to start off in the air.

Dan: Wuss.

Mark: So it's not bad for people like us, who don't really like flight sims.

Paul: Hang on! I do, I just don't think this one is that good. It's just a standard flight sim, there's

nothing special about it.

Dan: What are you talking about? It's got the best graphics of any flight sim around.

Richie: The graphics are great.

Paul: That's just because it's the latest. It's good to see the Russians for a change, but there's nothing really innovative.

Dan: What?! It's got proper sound effects, like the fly by of engines, proper machine gun noises. It's as innovative as it gets.

Richie: It's incredibly detailed, but there's no presentation.

Mark: What gets me is having to

but that was about it.

Mark: It is more about technical detail than fun and atmosphere.

Steve: You don't get any sense of being involved in the war.

Mark: It's just a series of missions that happen to have WWII planes.

Dan: You ain't played it online then. That's where it's at.

COMMANDOS 2

Steve: It's just bloody annoying. I reviewed the first one and I thought: "I'm not going through this again." It's too hard.

Dan: Hard is an understatement.

Paul: It's like that at first, but as



It's the best-looking flight sim available, but IL-2 Sturmovik isn't necessarily the most fun.

"It is the best flight sim ever. Hands down"

DANIEL EMERY
IL-2 STURMOVIK

fly all the way to where the action is in every mission. It's realistic but...

Steve: You can speed it up, but it still takes ages.

Richie: I prefer B-17, even though the graphics are worse. It's much more fun, and it has RPG elements.

Dan: Snore. Great idea, crap execution.

Paul: Both *B-17* and *Battle Of Britain* do the WWII atmosphere much better than *Sturmovik*.

Dan: *Battle Of Britain* was a polished turd. The mass of aircraft was a nice touch,

soon as you detect the pattern it's really dull. Just use the spy to distract that guard and slit his throat.

Richie: I think it's great. It's almost like a point and click adventure.

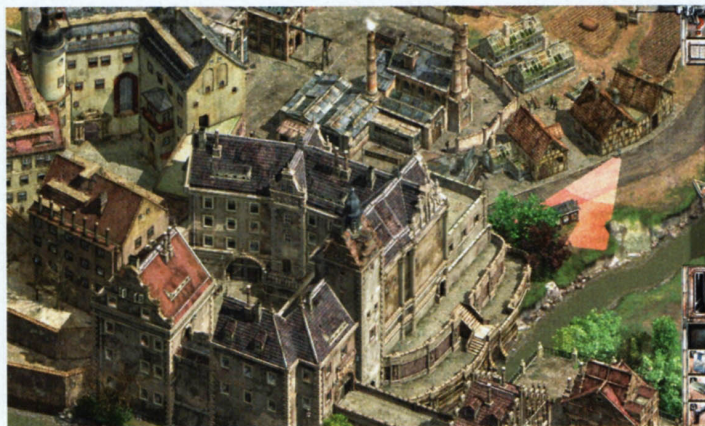
Steve: It's a glorified puzzle game.

Mark: It's not glorified, it's a fantastic puzzle game. It's all about figuring out how to get past certain points in the map, and although I understand what Paul says about it being the same every time, it's totally addictive.

Richie: It really captures that



Some might still find it too hard, but *Commandos 2* is a class act.



Not for everyone but it does convey the atmosphere of WWII.

Warlord comic feel, and it's got all the movie stuff too: the *Colditz* level, the *Bridge Over The River Kwai*...

Dan: No *Kelly's Heroes* though.

Mark: I love it. I never got past the first mission in the first game, but I got so hooked on this one I actually completed it.

Dan: You sad man.

Richie: I got nowhere near. I must have spent 30 hours on the first four missions. I found it really hard, but really good.

Paul: I thought it was really easy. They've toned it down too much, I got bored.

Mark: It's balanced on the normal level. But if you want the crazy toughness of the first game you can select Hard. I thought the levels were so good and there are so many good ideas in it – like sniping through windows, poisoning meals, riding elephants and so on – that I never got bored.

Richie: It's a good game because the German guards smoke.

Dan: So that's why they lost the war.

Steve: I don't think WWII was won by throwing packets of cigarettes at Nazi soldiers though. Maybe they could do a smoking simulator. Two buttons: inhale/exhale, and

you start feeling great.

Mark: Another thing I really like is that it's got a realistic side with all the detail, but at the same time it's very much an old-skool game, very artificial in its mechanics.

"It's clever, but it doesn't have the immediacy of a shooter"

STEVE HILL
COMMANDOS 2

Steve: It's clever, but it doesn't have the immediacy of a shooter. You're too detached from the action.

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Mark: As ever it's the multiplayer that matters. Single-player doesn't have much to do with WWII.

Richie: It's got Helga from 'Allo 'Allo.

Steve: If *Medal Of Honor* is *Saving Private Ryan*, *Wolfenstein* is *They Stole Hitler's Brain*. The bits without the monsters are OK, but then you come across soldiers shooting these creatures and instead of fighting them they turn on you.

Dan: It's total crap. It has the best graphics of a

WWII FPS by miles, but that's about it. There's no immersion factor once you get past the first few levels.

Mark: It starts off pretty well, when you go into a cell where there's a Nazi scientist torturing

some guy. You think it's going places, but it's just going through corridors, down ladders, through doors...

Richie: The only fun stuff was things from the old game, like the plates of food.

Steve: I did enjoy eating the food. What gets me is that they tried to claim it was based on historical fact.

Mark: The multiplayer does give you more of a WWII feel, with the specialities and settings.

Richie: *Medal Of Honor* doesn't have a class system, but I prefer it.

Dan: So do I.

Paul: I don't.

Mark: I just don't understand the mentality behind being a medic.

Steve: Where's the fun in that?

Dan: Malpractice? Nurses?

Free access to drugs?

Richie: The wounded thing works quite well, but they could have taken it a step further. Instead of using an injection the medic could come up with a saw: "I'm afraid you're going to lose your legs..."

Paul: Great flamethrower too.

Steve: It's Gray Matter's speciality. They had it in *Kingpin*.

Richie: You can draw with it in the air, just like pissing in the snow...

MEDAL OF HONOR

Mark: It's a great game, but some of the levels are really poor. It's not consistently great.

Dan: Yeah, but the good bits outclass the bad bits by miles. And I'm not even gonna start talking about Omaha beach.

Richie: The last quarter is a bit dodgy. You spend ages on the last mission, and then it just says: "well done".

Steve: "You have just won the war."

Richie: It needed cut-scenes or something. It's just one mission after another.

Mark: There are some really good missions that you could play over and over though. The beach landing is the obvious one, although once you've cracked that you just crawl from one metal spike to another, it loses its charm a bit. But the atmosphere of lots of people screaming and dying around you is pretty amazing.

Paul: There are some great set pieces, like the village in ruins.

Steve: And the demo level, with

THE SHAPE OF WARS TO COME



WORLD WAR II IS EXPANDING

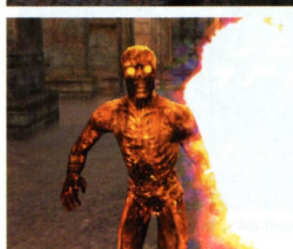
It seems we'll never tire of killing Nazis, and both *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *Medal Of Honor* are making the most of it with an expansion pack each. *RTCW: Enemy Territory* is a stand-alone title that dismisses all the occult rubbish and builds on the success of the multiplayer mode by making the single-player game squad-based. Meanwhile, *Medal Of Honor: Spearhead* will have you parachuting into Germany to pave the way for D-Day.

There's a few big name sequels too. We've been waiting for *Hidden & Dangerous 2* for as long as we can remember, but we're sure it will be worth the wait when it does arrive. Less exciting is *Commandos 3*, mainly because Gonzo Suarez (the creator and designer of 1 and 2) and Jon Beltran (lead programmer) have left Pyro, which means the new game could just be more of the same with better graphics. Let's hope not.

There are also some newcomers, such as the 3D RTS *Frontline Attack*, *GI Combat* (from the makers of the *Close Combat* series) and *Combat Mission 2* joining the recently released *Battlefield 1942*. It seems the war will never end.



If you can forgive the moronic monsters and concentrate on multiplayer, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* is a blinder.



the churchyard, just hiding behind a gravestone with bullets flying all over.

Mark: It still annoys me though that you're soaking in all this WWII atmosphere and then you kill someone and they drop a health bottle that makes a Nintendo sound when you pick it up.

Steve: Ploing!

Dan: So how would you do it? Just have diminishing health for the entire map?

Richie: They should have had food like in *RTCW*.

Steve: Yeah, you've just been shot so you eat some beef with roast potatoes.

Paul: There's a lot of respawning too. Although there's some good team AI.

Mark: There's the levels in the snow where the AI can see you wherever you are and you can't see a thing.

Richie: Some bits are disappointing, but others are so good it does make up for it. And it's little things, like shooting the helmets off soldiers' heads and seeing the panic in their faces, that really make it for me.

SUDDEN STRIKE II

Richie: I loved the first one, but you have to look at the box to remember you're playing the sequel. It's identical. The graphics aren't great but you do have a great scale and

there's none of that boring resource management stuff.

Dan: It's past its sell-by date. It was great when it came up, now it's the same old crap in a new box. Bollocks to it.

Paul: You do get that scale with hundreds of units but the interface is a small-squad one, you can't control things, there are no formations...

Richie: They have improved it for the sequel though. It's a good strategy game, although you don't get a good sense of progression through WWII via those terrible briefings.

Mark: I can understand the appeal of playing with bucketfuls of army men but they're so tiny it's ridiculous, it's just a swarm of pixels.

Steve: They're like insects.

Mark: I did think at one point it was an alternative version of history: WWII fought by insects. You have all the ant soldiers, the blue bottle bombers...

Richie: And they have American's doing the British voices.

Steve: It's a German game isn't it?

Mark: Which is highly unusual in itself. They don't do WWII.

Richie: Actually it's Russian, only the publisher is German.

Steve: It's still brave of them to take it on... considering they started the war.

Paul: I like that you have different campaigns for all the

different sides. There's no taking of sides or flag-waving.

Richie: All the missions are attacking though. There are no defending ones. And I don't like the multiplayer. I do love the single-player, but it's just too similar to the first one. [LW]



Once you've tasted the Omaha landing, you'll never forget *Medal Of Honor*.

THE WINNER IS... MEDAL OF HONOR



IT'S ANOTHER DECORATION FOR EA'S TOP SHOOTER

It may not be a perfect game, but *Medal Of Honor* never fails to collect the silverware when matched up to other shooters. The outcome is the same when compared to other WWII titles. For Steve there's no question about it: "It's more fun to dodge about in first-person than to click on bloody ants. You feel like you're there, in the war, killing Nazis."

Paul has more sophisticated reasons for picking it, since for him it's: "The best recreation of WWII yet, and it's the best game here too."

Dan agrees, although he does think it's "just a shame there are no Brits in it."

The only dissenting voices are Mark and Richie. For Richie, *Commandos 2* "is great fun and that's how I see WWII, through the comics and adventure films, and it really captures that." Mark also votes for C2, because he "loved every minute of it. There's just so many great ideas, and the amount of detail in each map just sucks me in every time." But even they had to admit *Medal Of Honor* is a worthy winner.



Sudden Strike II suffers from being a copy of the first title.

THE VERDICT

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT TO PICK WINNERS, BUT WE FORCED THEM TO ANYWAY

BEST GAME
RUNNER-UP



RICHIE
Commandos 2
MoH



STEVE
MoH
RTCW



PAUL
MoH
Commandos 2



DAN
MoH
H&D

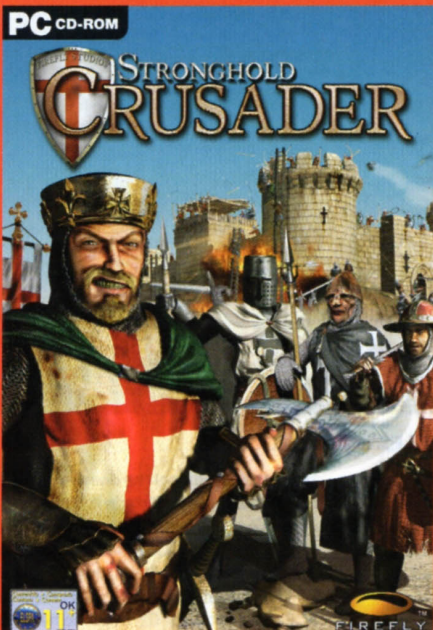


MARK
Commandos 2
MoH

VIRGIN LOVES

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2

Create your own rides using the all-new Roller coaster designer and trade creations and challenge other Rollercoaster Tycoons worldwide on www.rollercoastertycoon2.com. Push the limits with 25 new roller coasters and 20 new scenarios including the most thrilling rides from the worlds greatest roller coaster parks of Six Flags.

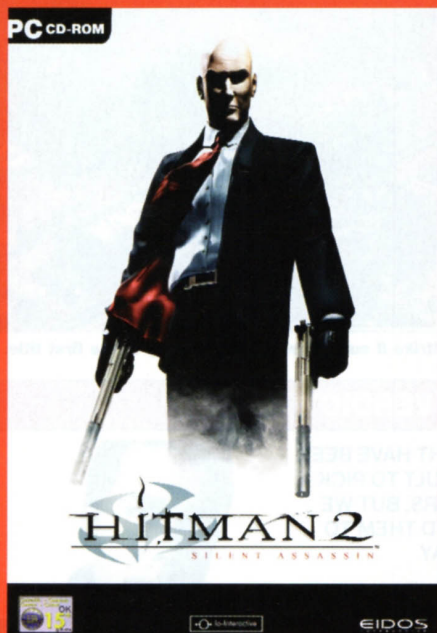


STRONGHOLD CRUSADER

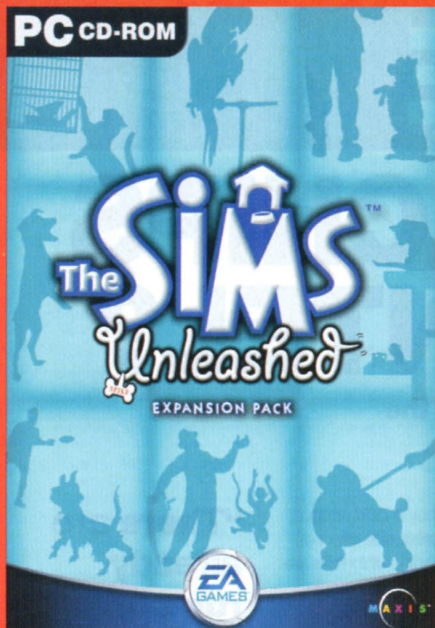
Journey to distant lands renowned for brave warriors and fearsome weaponry in Stronghold Crusader. Combining aspects of a city builder and a real-time strategy game, you lead a determined group of crusaders, forged by centuries of barbaric conflicts, or wage war against a powerful foreign invader amidst the haze of the desert heat.

HITMAN 2

The follow-up to the BAFTA award nominated Hitman: Codename 47. You must enter the mind of a genetically engineered assassin Codename 47, whose deadly efficiency is now needed more than ever. Lured back into a global ring of deception, you must kill not only to make a living, but to continue living. This time it's not just business. It's personal.



PC CD-ROM



SIMS UNLEASHED EXPANSION PACK

As fans of The Sims know, there has always been something missing from their virtual neighbourhoods — pets. In The Sims Unleashed, players can now add furry friends to their Sims' families. An all new expanded neighbourhood featuring parks, pet stores, cafes and markets will give the Sims and their new pets a variety of places to sniff, explore and meet their new neighbours.

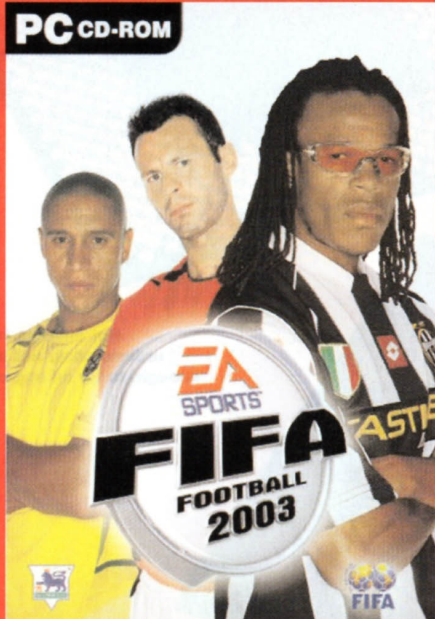
PC CD-ROM



MAFIA

Based in the 1930's, Mafia brings the underworld to life in this 3rd person 3D action game. Rise from a lowly but well-dressed Footsoldier to the envied and feared Made Man in an era of big bands, zoot suits and Roadsters. Take on the role of a hitman, enforcer, getaway driver and more in your struggle for respect, money and power with the Salieri Family.

PC CD-ROM



FIFA 2003

FIFA Football 2003 introduces a completely re-worked AI engine that focuses on three new enhancements: team play, team tactics and real player attributes. Use the advantage of playing as a team to break down the opposition with precision passing and quality finishing.

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Details correct at time of going to press.

HARDWARE

THE GREAT FRAME-RATE ROBBERY



■ **HARD WIRED** Steve Spence

▲ I hate benchmarks. There, I said it. I hate them. It doesn't mean I'm going to stop submitting each and every graphics card to the most excruciating tests known to man, but I'm going to have a moan. Take 3DMark 2001 for example, what exactly does it measure? Gaming performance? Not exactly, after all you can't play 3DMark. It measures your graphics card's ability to use common 3D features and techniques, marking them on how well they can do each, which means quicker cards can lose to slower offerings that support a few more features, even if they can't provide the performance needed to turn them on in-game.

Now I can't speak for everyone but I think that's pretty misleading – relying on those numbers alone you could end up spending more and getting less – and this was one of the reasons we switched to real game benchmarks as of last issue. True gaming tests like *UT2003* and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* are the way to go – I don't know about you but the reason I got my PC was to play games.

Game benchmarks still aren't perfect – that's why programs like 3DMark exist, but for the time being you're going to see us focusing on measuring exactly what your hardware is going to do for you in the real world. Making sure we keep up to date, by using the very latest games, that sap the power from the hardest graphics card should give you the best indication of the sort of card you should be spending your cash on.

NEW AMD CHIPS TO BEAT INTEL?

Intel might possess the fastest processors at the moment but for AMD the battle isn't over

SINCE THE introduction of the AthlonXP processors last year, very little has changed with AMD chips apart from the introduction of a cooler, smaller core in the form of thoroughbred, and this is one of the reasons AMD are currently languishing in second place to Intel in terms of performance. Pentium4, by contrast, has had no less than four revisions, the most significant of which is the move to a 133MHz quad pumped bus (533MHz) and the introduction of an additional 256kb of on-chip cache memory.

This month AMD users get something new to chirp about, and it could be the news that helps propel AMD back to the top. With the introduction of the AthlonXP 2700+ and AthlonXP 2800+ CPUs, AMD is introducing a new front-side bus speed, 33MHz quicker than the existing 133MHz, running at 166MHz. This will deliver an extra 25 per cent bandwidth, which could equate to anything around ten per cent overall more bang for your buck. This increase will also mean that base recommended memory will move up to DDR333, matching the effective 333MHz bus speed of the new processors.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

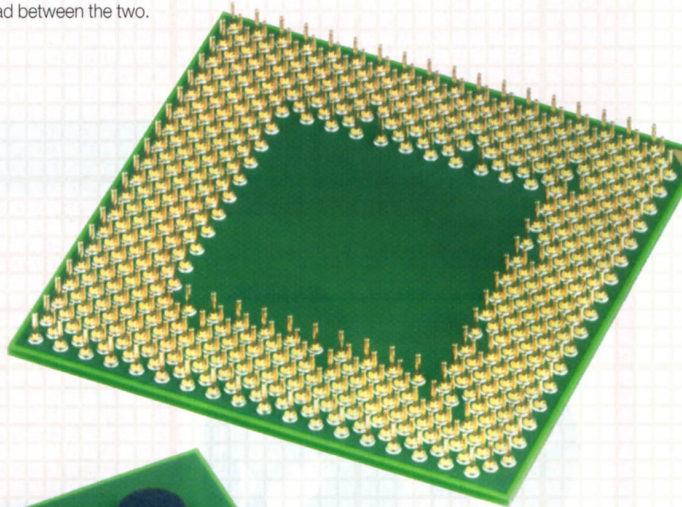
As with every piece of good news, there's a downside though. Many motherboards previously compatible with the AthlonXP – going right back to certain KT133 offerings will be unable to take the newer chips as they don't support the bus speeds and dividers needed to run all your hardware within spec. If you've picked up a KT333/KT400-based board or are waiting for

nForce2, the good news is they should support the new silicon. Another possible side effect of these higher frequencies is heat – AthlonXPs are notoriously hot and higher frequencies require greater voltages to maintain stability, which means things could end up running hotter still.

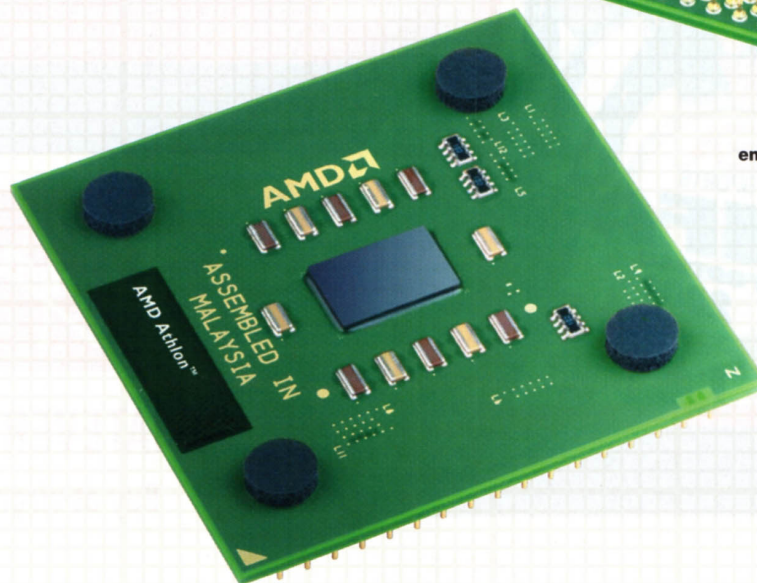
It's also not such good news for overclockers. After making new CPUs difficult to unlock, enthusiasts rely on being able to raise front-side bus speeds to gain extra speed. With the new CPUs already running at 166MHz, it's not yet clear if there will be any room for manoeuvre.

That's now, but don't think the story ends here. There are already rumours of new 667MHz bus speed Intel chips looming, possibly in the New Year, and once things settle down after Christmas you can expect an extensive head-to-head between the two.

“There are already rumours of new 667MHz bus speed Intel chips looming, possibly in the New Year”



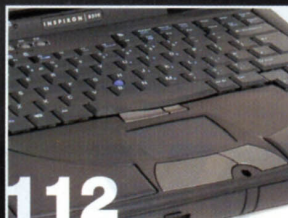
Hot enough, but unfortunately not big enough, to fry an egg on.





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BROADBAND
Phat pipes are easy



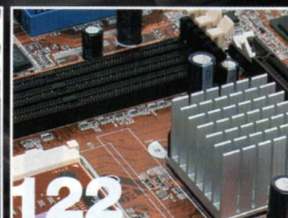
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MOBILE GAMING
Laptops come of age



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DEAR WANDY
Got a problem you can't fix?



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BUYER'S GUIDE
The best kit, the lowest prices

THE AUDIGY STRIKES BACK

It's been our Best Buy card for ages but its successor is almost here

WHAT WITH all this talk of processors, graphics cards and motherboards, it's nice to have something else to shout about once in a while. Soundcards are a relatively static commodity but Creative has just announced the successor to the Audigy soundcard, the Audigy II.

Raising the bar even further, Audigy II offers 24-bit/192kHz sound quality with 6.1 channels of sound (six-speaker plus subwoofer), THX-certified Dolby Digital EX support for your DVDs and EAX Advanced HD. The card is also one of the first to fully support DVD audio, far higher in quality than conventional CD audio and delivering the highest quality audio available for your PC.

Connectivity-wise, the cards are very similar to the original Audigy, offering Firewire and piles of connectors for speakers, headphones, microphones and pretty much anything you care to plug in. Although we're not entirely sure if you really need anything above 5.1 sound, the step up to 6.1 will be relatively painless and a few speaker sets are already on their way, the first of which is the Inspire 6700s, from... you guessed it, Creative. The combination of the two should be pretty awesome.

Audigy II is going to be available in two versions, the Audigy II player and Audigy II Platinum, and with any luck we'll have the first review next issue. Aren't we nice?



An extremely sound purchase. Sorry.

PRICEWATCH

Check the latest price chart and make sure you don't pay over the odds

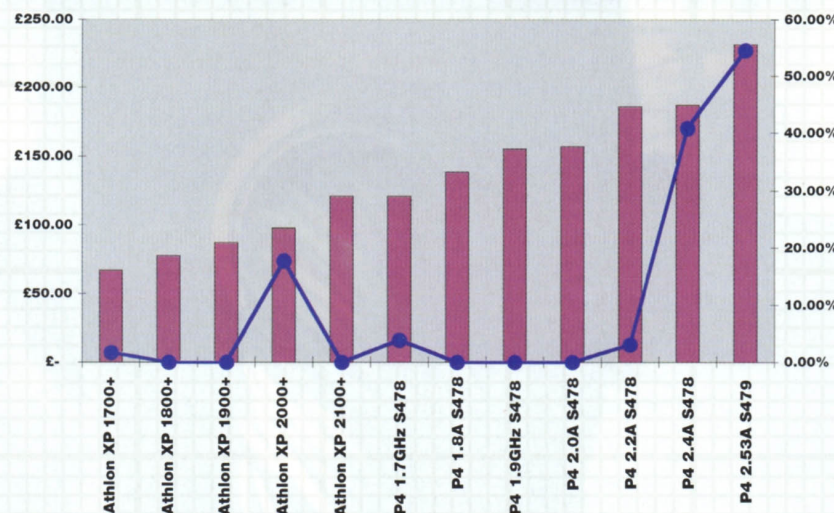
MEMORY

It might be the sort of upgrade that you don't want to spend your money on – a bit like buying socks and pants – and it's not as sexy as a new graphics card, but RAM could well be the cheapest way to a huge performance hike... Just look at the prices.



Price per 256Mb RAM:
● PC133 SDR
● PC2100 DDR
● PC2700 DDR

PROCESSORS: PRICE AND PERCENTAGE DROP



PROCESSORS

This is what happens when Intel's new top-end chip takes over the high prices set by its predecessor, allowing the formerly bleeding-

edge technology to take a huge tumble. The P4 2.4 and 2.53 processors are now available at almost half the price of last month,

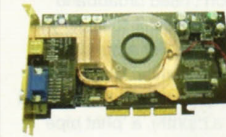
which is not bad going at all. So if you've been holding on to see what would happen, give yourself a huge pat on the back.

SNIPPETS

NVIDIA A GO-GO

With ATI and Trident fighting it out to get their new AGP8x chips out, NVIDIA has just announced refreshes of their GeForce4 cards to comply with the new AGP3.0 standard. Codename NV18 and NV28, boards based on the new GPUs deliver full AGP8x bandwidth, which will mean instant performance gains of up to ten per cent. Better still, some manufacturers such as Gainward are supplying the new cards clocked higher than standard and are claiming anything up to (and over) 20 per cent on previous incarnations.

TO THE MAX



With a little while longer before we see any more information on the upcoming GeForce5, manufacturers are finally having a play with their GeForce4 designs and the most innovative so far is ABIT's OTES. Short for Outside Thermal Exhaust System, it's a double-wide card which uses a laptop-style cooler and special fan on a Ti4200 GPU. Instead of recirculating the air which cools the chip, it's forced through a slot cut in the back of the backplate which lowers the ambient temperature. ABIT claim this makes their card around 15 per cent cooler and the new cards, available this month, offer core and memory speeds ten per cent higher than standard Ti4200-based boards.

BIG IS BEAUTIFUL

If you're finding the 120Gb hard drive in our Buyer's Guide a bit of a squeeze, try the new behemoth from Maxtor on for size. As the first member of the new MaxLine range this 320Gb should be enough to cope with every game install conceivable, with plenty of space to spare for God knows what else.

THE ART OF ZEN



While Apple has finally given their iPod PC compatibility, Creative has been working hard at cramming a new MP3 player into an even smaller case. Dubbed the 'Zen', this new 20Gb device could almost be confused for a new-looking iPod being much the same size and shape.

Unlike the iPod however, the Zen will support both USB and Firewire connectivity and should retail for anything up to £100 less.

THE JOY OF BROADBAND

Broadband might not be better than sex but if you're trying to play games over the Internet it's a must. Steve Spence shows you that converting and installing a home network isn't an expensive or messy process

TRYING to play games over a 56K modem is like slipping on a pair of wellies and trying to get down a kids' slide. If you're still labouring under the pretension that you're at the bleeding edge of technology, forget it. And, if you think you can't afford or don't need broadband then we're here to show you otherwise. For around a fiver more than most unmetered dial-up packages (think about £20 a month), a 'phat pipe' can be yours.

But if that's convinced you that you should make the break, here comes the tricky

part. What sort of connection do you want? The first and probably simplest of options for broadband virgins is the cable modem. Depending on the state of the cable network in your area the upgrade to cable should mean no more than a phone call. Modern digiboxes from NTL for instance already contain the necessary cable modem and Ethernet socket – if your area is broadband-capable all you need is to give them a call to get switched on. Now that really is just plug and play. You can choose between connections at 0.5Mbit and 1Mbit, although

realistic bandwidth is generally up to 20 per cent less.

KING OF THE WORLD

While cable modem connections provide more bandwidth, slightly faster, therefore delivering better download speeds, the king of ping for online play is ADSL. Unlike cable connections, which are supplied by your local Cable TV provider (ie blueyonder or NTL), DSL is an 'open' market – if your phone line passes the quality tests there are tons of companies to pick from and new providers popping up every day.

Choices range from engineer-installed services which covers everything right down to the configuration of your PC, to DIY self-install or 'wires only' options – which together caters for techies and the mildly technophobic alike. For more provider-specific information there's tons of stuff to read online – one of the best sites to visit for impartial UK ADSL coverage is ADSLguide (www.adslguide.org.uk).

An assisted set-up from your ISP may sound like a safe bet, but modems bundled with packages are notoriously dodgy – you can generally

pick up something better separately for less. Don't forget, although really top-notch kit can't make your connection any quicker than the line it's running on, a dodgy modem or router can make things a lot slower and ruin your experience. Some ISPs have an installation fee as high as £150, for certain packages. These include modems with a certain amount of support included for configuration problems. If you're at all tech-savvy, this one probably isn't the option for you. Worst case scenario is if you go for a



wires-only package and buy your hardware separately, but then you can always write in to Wendy when it all goes pear-shaped.

SHARE THE WEALTH

Once you've got all that glorious bandwidth, chances are you're going to want to share it. Many homes have two or more PCs these days, and unless you want your lounge to look like a cyber café they're probably not going to be sitting in the same room. Discounting the use of Windows' in-built Internet connection sharing, which relies on one PC with a modem being on whenever another PC wants to access to the outside world, that only leaves one option – a router.

A router is a piece of kit that connects networks. In this case a broadband router connects your home network to the network of your ISP, sharing your connectivity across all the machines you connect. Units start pretty cheap, at around £90, which is less than you'll pay for the sub-standard modems bundled in many engineer-installed options.

With your shiny new router set up, the next step is to work out how you're going to pipe those MP3s and what have you to your PCs. You could, for example, consider running network cable all the way round the house, but your girlfriend/mum/wife/whatever isn't likely to appreciate a mass of black CAT5e wires running up the stairs right inbetween the cream carpet and magnolia walls.

PUT YOUR KIT ON

HomePNA (a network that uses existing telephone lines dotted around your house) is an option, but the choice of kit out there is quite limited and it still relies on having phone points next to your PC. The simplest and most flexible option by far is WiFi – wireless networking. Although slower than 100Mbit wired networks, the 11Mbit (22Mbit in some cases) of bandwidth afforded by WiFi is still overkill for your 0.5/1Mbit connection and it's extremely easy to set it up with modern operating systems like Windows XP – check out our three-step guide below. **PCZ**

LOOK NO WIRES!

CABLES ARE SO PASSE DARLING. IF YOU'RE ANYONE, YOUR HOUSE IS WIRELESS. HERE'S HOW TO DO IT IN XP IN THREE EASY STEPS...

1 CONFIGURE YOUR ROUTER

You need to have a network card installed on your PC. Then all you do is plug your router into the mains, attach some Ethernet cable between this and your network card and you'll be provided with a WEP key for your device. Keys are generally ten characters long and hexadecimal (numbers 0-9 letters A-F).

2 INSTALL WIFI (WIRELESS NETWORKING) CARD

Once the driver is installed, Windows XP automatically searches for any local access points. Once it spots your network, type in the WEP key you added in step one. Now you can congratulate yourself, that's the hard bit over.

3 CHECK YOUR SIGNAL

Because a wireless network uses short wave radio, electrical sources can cause interference – keep an eye on the signal strength meter for the first couple of days just in case. As long as you don't stick the access point in your basement your signal should be good throughout your home.

GLOSSARY:

ADSL – Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line.

DMZ – An IP outside of the firewall.

HomePNA – A de-facto home networking standard, developed by the Home Phoneline Networking Alliance. This technology, allows slower-rate network signals to be sent over your existing telephone wiring – without disturbing the existing voice or fax services.

Mbit – Megabits or Mbit are a measure of throughput in terms of broadband connectivity, to determine what kind of transfer rates divide by eight. That means a 576kbit ADSL connection is theoretically capable of up to 72kb per second!

WEP – Wired Equivalent Privacy is a security protocol for wireless networks. It encrypts data and requires a password generated at the access point to connect to the wireless network.

WiFi – Wireless Networking, which means you can connect one or more PC to a broadband connection without trailing wires everywhere.

THREE OF THE BEST ROUTERS

IF YOU WANT A WIRELESS BROADBAND CONNECTION YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A ROUTER AND A PCI CARD FOR EACH PC YOU WANT TO CONNECT. HERE'S THE BEST YOU CAN BUY...

DI-614+ AIRPLUS

MANUFACTURER D-Link

WEB www.dlink.co.uk

PRICE £150

PHONE 020 8731 5555

PCI CARD DWL-520+

PRICE £50

The DI-614+ is rather unique in that D-Link has managed to squeeze out double the bandwidth, delivering an impressive 22Mbps. The unit has a full firewall as well as the much-needed DMZ (for gaming). The case itself is a little loud, looking like a throwback '80s alarm clock from some angles, though once it's hidden on a wall or under a desk with the included mountings it shouldn't be too much of an issue.



**PCZONE
VERDICT**

88

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PCI CARD WMP-11

PRICE £92

The Linksys BEFW11S4 had the most complete and flexible configuration interfaces of the units on test. Configuration was seamless on both the desktop PCs and the router itself. Offering the same feature set of the Belkin with an additional network port and the lowest price of the three, we were more than satisfied although the comparatively high price of their wireless cards may be slightly off-putting.



**PCZONE
VERDICT**

81

Simple and easy to use

F5D6230-3

MANUFACTURER Belkin

WEB www.belkin.co.uk

PRICE £159

PHONE 0800 2235 5440

PCI CARD F5D6001

PRICE £95

Rather understated in its appearance the Belkin WiFi router would fit in just about anywhere unlike the comparatively lairy D-Link and Linksys units. The package is fairly run of the mill, offering 11Mbps of bandwidth per port and the standard DHCP server plus network address translation and a DMZ for

gaming purposes. Unlike the others however it only has three network ports which, while no biggie for most users, would limit its capacity slightly for ad-hoc LAN gaming.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

78

A very run of the mill router



XP4-T2

BETA TEST

■ Manufacturer: Trident | Price: TBA | Phone: N/A | www.trident.com.tw

There's a new card coming that could rival NVIDIA's current roster at a fraction of the price. Interested?

THE WORLD of 3D cards is a treacherous old business, with the headlines focused on cards which cost well over £300. Most of you haven't got access to that sort of cash for an upgrade, especially as it seems like you're expected to stomp the same amount out every six months. This is why high-end chips like Ti4600 account for less than three per cent of sales in any given period.

That doesn't mean to say such chips are a bad thing – it's the top-end 'bleeding edge' which drives the industry, with the top chip of today becoming the mainstream GPU of tomorrow. One recent example is the Radeon 9700 which gave rise to the Radeon 9000 – a cut-down version of the mighty DX8.1 Radeon 8500 GPU, with pricing somewhere between £100-£150 depending on flavour of chip and bundle. For many though, £150 is still too much – a large proportion of gaming cards sold cost under £100, although historically the options are few and far between.

Trident may seem like a new name, but it's actually a relatively old hand, albeit with a slightly different perspective to the likes of NVIDIA and ATI. When things

really kicked off in the video market and competition was getting fierce back in 1996 they made a move to the notebook market, which is where they've been ever since.

The thing about notebooks is that the design starts at a completely different angle. Instead of deciding how many polygons you want to push and designing the hardware that can deliver it, the chips in laptops are constrained much more by voltage, heat, chip size and cost – and it's from these conditions that XP4 was born.

NUMBER GAME

The idea was simple – design a chip using 30 million transistors – half that of GeForce4. The GPU would deliver full DX8.1 and base DX9 with respectable performance for laptops. Chips in desktop systems could be clocked far higher.

The mobile part was announced in April and this

month sees the arrival of three desktop chips under the XP4 moniker. All three are four-pipeline GPUs built on a 0.13-micron manufacture process (the only other GPU that will currently use this is NVIDIA's new NV30). At the top end is the XP4 T3, a 300Mhz chip with 128Mb of 350Mhz DDR (700Mhz effective) memory, which uses a 128-bit bus. The mid range is occupied by XP4 T2, clocked at 250Mhz core with 64Mb of 250Mhz DDR (500Mhz effective) memory and a 128-bit memory interface.

Finally, at the bottom rung lives XP4 T1 which has the same clockspeeds as T2, but only a 64-bit bus. While this may sound somewhat like

the GeForce4 family round-up, none of these cards are going to break £100 – all three of them cost somewhere between £40 and £90.

A STAR IS BORN

We managed to get our hands on a beta T2 for a couple of days this month and its performance was very impressive indeed, even with beta drivers and silicon the card thrashed our

Radeon 9000 scores and in a couple of places hit Ti4200-like

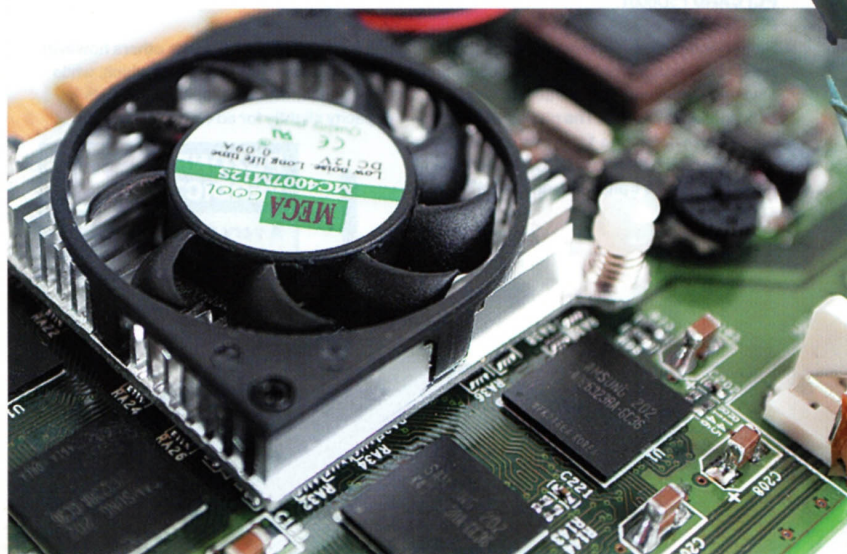
figures. Trident claim that by the time the products hit the shelves, the XP4 T3 cards will come within 80 per cent of Ti4600. With the base DirectX9 features these performance levels could put XP4 ahead of NVIDIA's current range of products. And with the NV30/NV31 expected later this year, the graphics card market could change quite quickly. **CP**

GOOD THINGS COME...

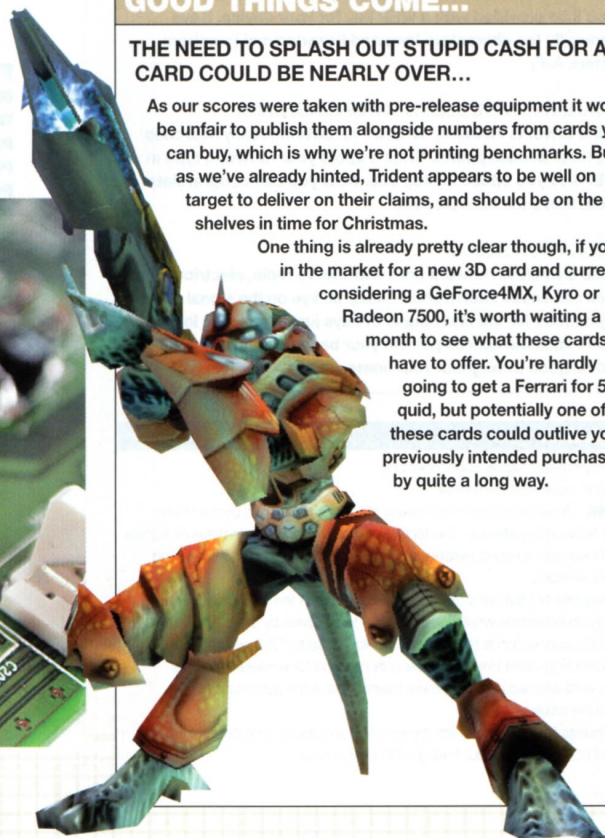
THE NEED TO SPLASH OUT STUPID CASH FOR A CARD COULD BE NEARLY OVER...

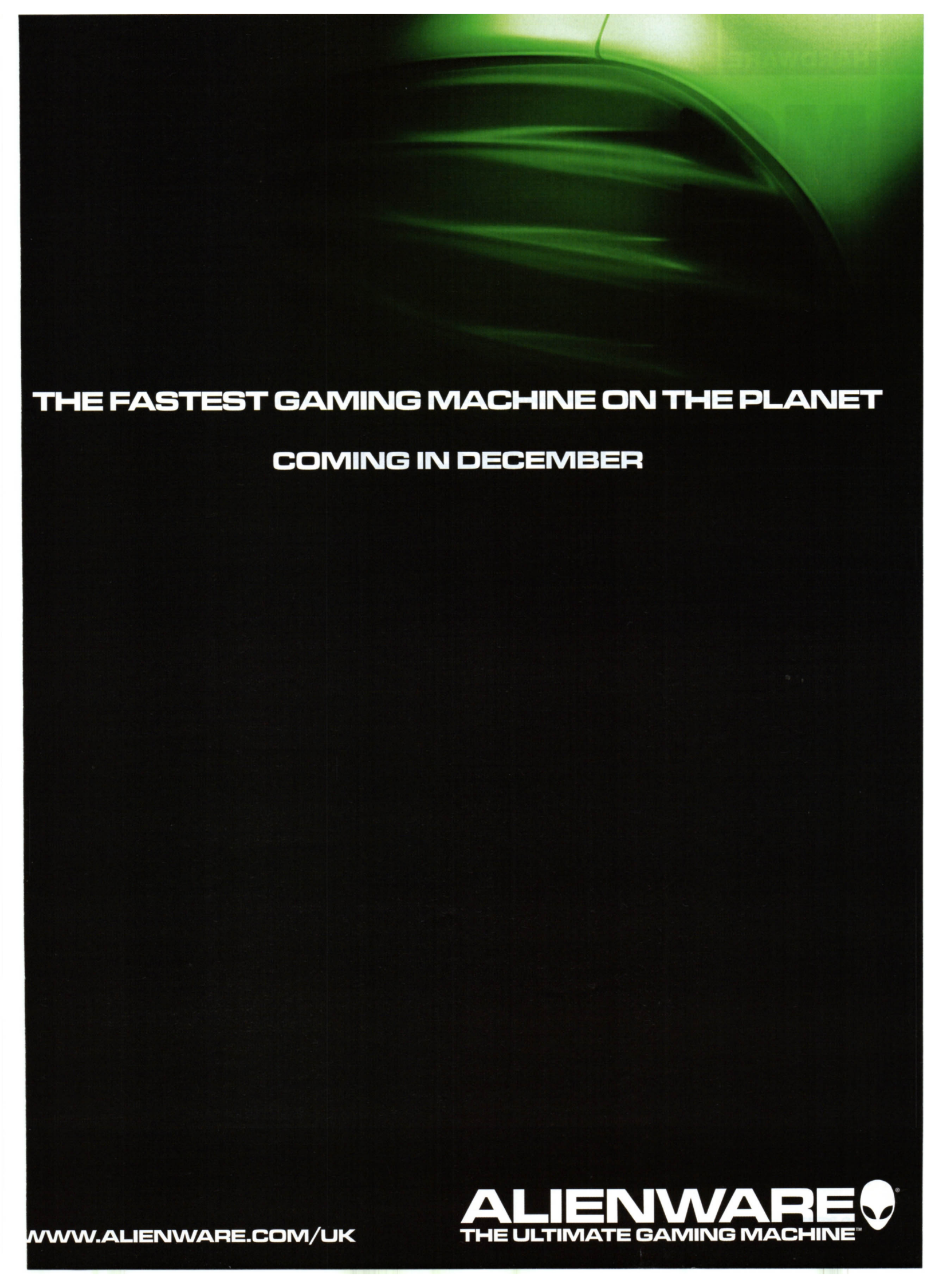
As our scores were taken with pre-release equipment it would be unfair to publish them alongside numbers from cards you can buy, which is why we're not printing benchmarks. But, as we've already hinted, Trident appears to be well on target to deliver on their claims, and should be on the shelves in time for Christmas.

One thing is already pretty clear though, if you're in the market for a new 3D card and currently considering a GeForce4MX, Kyro or Radeon 7500, it's worth waiting a month to see what these cards have to offer. You're hardly going to get a Ferrari for 50 quid, but potentially one of these cards could outlive your previously intended purchase by quite a long way.



Brilliant performance for under £100? Watch this space...





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MOBILE GAMING

Steve Spence has spent his life trying to convince people that size doesn't matter. Finally, he's proved right

FOR TWO years I regularly attended LAN parties, spending every other weekend lugging my PC, monitor and various items of periphery all over the place. Over the same period, I probably spent more money on repairs and replacements than I did on upgrades.

The sad truth of the matter is that even with lightweight aluminium cases and flat-panel screens, conventional PCs just aren't cut out for moving from A to B on a regular basis. It was for this reason that semi-portable and eventually laptop machines were originally developed, and while they may have been little use for much more than word processing and

the odd brief *Doom* session even a year ago, today's breed of mobile machines exceed the technology of many current desktop boxes.

As we reported in last month's news, ATI has just released the Radeon 9000 Mobility, a mobile graphics chip based on its mainstream GPU. With full DirectX 8.1 support and some of the best power consumption specs around, the new kid makes bold claims to dethrone NVIDIA's current mobile chip – GeForce 4Go – and deliver a level of performance previously unseen.

Now I don't know about you, but given the choice between two decent-spec games PCs, one

consisting of a huge hulking case and monitor and the other a laptop which could be put away on a shelf or drawer when not in use, I'd go for the laptop every time. Cost isn't much of an issue either, with 2Ghz systems kicking off around £1,500 – complete with stuff like CD or DVD rewriteable and top-notch sound and speakers.

And so, we find ourselves with a question – and a dilemma. Have laptops caught the desktop technology up to a point where a gaming laptop is a real option – and even if they have would such a machine be better in the long run? Only one way to find out.

INSPIRON 8200

■ Manufacturer: Dell | Price: £2,055 | Phone: 0870 152 4699

<http://www.dell.com>



THE INSPIRON

8200 Dell is a top-spec mobile which would make many of our desktop PCs feel inferior. With a 2200Mhz P4 processor and half a gigabyte of RAM, it easily exceeds the recommended spec of any modern game. Other creature comforts include a

CDRW/DVD-ROM drive and Network/Modem connectivity with 60Gb of storage to fill full of games, apps and MP3s.

Although gaming obviously requires the use of a decent gaming mouse, the unit has a built-in touchpad with two pairs of mouse buttons to suit either method of navigation. While it isn't a patch on the cPad shown off by the Toshiba it does the job quite competently.

As one of the first machines on the market to use a combination of the new 2.2Ghz Pentium-4 mobile and new Mobility Radeon, we expected nothing but the best from the Dell and in a couple of places felt slightly let down; sure it can do all of the pixel-shading effects and shift frames at a

respectable rate, but when it comes to texturing, the GPU shows

the same failings seen in the desktop part, with the supposedly less-capable NVIDIA chip taking the lead even with 200Mhz less CPU horsepower backing it up.

Sound was slightly lacklustre, with a Crystal sound chip driving rather weak internal speakers, but separate speakers or decent headphones would be an easy upgrade and with nearly £500 difference to the Toshiba you could easily throw in a pair of our Buyer's Guide-recommended Sennheiser HS600s – a snip at £200!

The final consideration, as with any mobile machine has to be power. Disappointingly, the Mobility Radeon 9000 has had its PowerPlay power management disabled – something ATI claim will be addressed in the future, but until then it means the chip is running full-pelt regardless of what you're doing. Thankfully Dell have thrown a second battery into the bundle which can be swapped with the first, or used in place of the floppy drive to double your playing time.

WHAT IN THE BOX?

RADEON 9000 MOBILE

Based on ATI's desktop part, Radeon 9000, the Mobility Radeon 9000 is a four-pipeline GPU clocked at 240Mhz which has a theoretical fill rate of 960Mpixels/s. The chip uses 64Mb of DDR, which is clocked at 420Mhz and supplies approximately 6720Mb/s of peak memory bandwidth. Unlike the GeForce 4Go 460, the Radeon 9000 Mobile is fully DirectX 8.1 capable, delivering all the extra effects, meaning games should look as game designers intended.

SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: 2.2Ghz Intel Pentium 4-m
MEMORY: 512Mb 266Mhz DDR
HARD DISK: 60Gb **SCREEN:** 15" UXGA TFT (1600x1200)
GRAPHICS: ATI Radeon 9000 Mobile 64Mb
SOUND: Crystal
FIXED BAY: 8 x DVD/24 x CD-RW Combo Drive
CONNECTIVITY: 2 x USB, 1 x serial, 1 x parallel, 1 x monitor, 1 x Firewire, 1 x PS/2 (keyboard/mouse), sound (mic, headphone, line-in)
FLOPPY DRIVE: Removable, interchangeable with second battery
NETWORK: 100Mbps Ethernet
MODEM: 56k v92
PCMCIA: 2 x Type II
OPERATING SYSTEM: Windows XP Home Edition

PCZONE
VERDICT

74

Not as good as we hoped...

SATELLITE 5200-801

■ Manufacturer: Toshiba | Price: £2499 | Phone: 0870 444 8944
www.toshiba.co.uk

FROM THE curvaceous case, down to the wide-angle screen, the Satellite 5200 from Toshiba oozes luxury. Bearing a 2Ghz Pentium 4 mobile processor and 512Mb of DDR, it may be 200Mhz slower than the

Dell, but the overall bundle feels much more complete.

A Yamaha YMS752 drives a 2.1 Harmon/Kardon speaker set-up which sounds awesome, outdoing many standalone 2.1 set-ups. The 15-inch Toshiba

Super View UXGA TFT is bright and vibrant with a massive viewing arc, and is one of the best we've seen of any notebook or for that matter flat panel.

Driving the screen is the latest incarnation of NVIDIA's

GeForce4Go mobile GPU – GeForce4Go 460, a derivative of the NV17.

As with the Dell machine, the Satellite 5200 has a touchpad for everyday navigation and while it isn't quite up to gaming, the cPad as it is called has a few nifty tricks up its sleeve. For one, the entire touch-sensitive area is

transparent, behind which a liquid crystal display is situated with an electric blue backlight. Through a small control panel application it's possible to display any image of the correct size and proportion on this screen, which means you can badge up the laptop with your clan logo or guild motif. It's also possible to use this with specific applications and we understand there's even a Winamp control panel in the pipeline.

It also comes with a DVD-RW/CD-RW, putting it well ahead of all but the top desktop systems – and with data becoming so huge it makes a lot of sense. On the right hand of the machine there's also a spare bay for future expansion – removable storage or an additional battery. With integrated LAN, modem, decent sound and NVIDIA's newest mobile chip, the fact this machine only has one expansion slot, in the form of a single type II PCMCIA is no real issue. For a DirectX7 chip, its

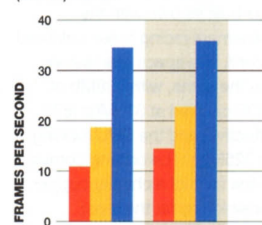
performance compared to the Radeon was very good indeed, bettering the ATI in many of the tests. While benchmarks like 3DMark may favour the ATI GPU, with its pixel shaders, the gaming benchmarks demonstrate which chip is better at pushing raw frames at the highest detail – in this case the NVIDIA. Sure things might not look quite so pretty, but in the heat of frantic gaming frame-rate is king, for which the GeForce4Go wins quite convincingly.



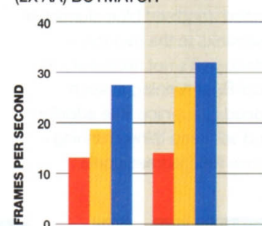
PCZONE VERDICT **82**
Reassuringly expensive

BENCHMARKS

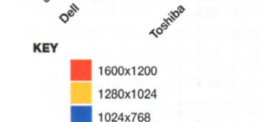
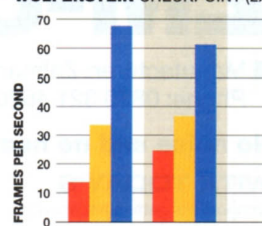
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 (2X AA) FLYBY



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 (2X AA) BOTMATCH



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN CHECKPOINT (2XAA)



All benchmarks were taken at maximum detail settings with 2xAA which as the above indicates, delivers frame-rates which would be totally unplayable. The numbers above show the GPUs when pushed to their limits and aren't representative of gameplay in normal conditions.

WHAT IN THE BOX?

GEFORCE4 GO 460

While the Toshiba may seem to be at a slight disadvantage, only supporting DirectX7 through its GeForce4MX-based GeForce4Go 460, NVIDIA has a few tricks up its sleeve with the latest of their GeForce4Go mobile family.

The new GPU runs at 275Mhz which means this two-pipeline GPU has a fill rate of 550Mpixels/sec, combined with 64Mb of 2ns DDR clocked at 580Mhz - delivering a peak memory bandwidth of 9280Mb/sec – nearly 50% more than the Mobility Radeon. This means that although it has a lower fill rate, the GeForce has masses more memory available to pushing those frames faster in many conditions, as the texture intensive Wolfenstein benchmarks in upper resolutions show.

SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: 2.0Ghz Intel Pentium 4-m
MEMORY: 512Mb 266Mhz DDR
HARD DISK: 60Gb **SCREEN:** 15-inch Toshiba Super View UXGA TFT
GRAPHICS: NVIDIA GeForce4Go 460 64Mb
SOUND: Yamaha YMS753
SPEAKERS: Harman/Kardon 2.1
FIXED BAY: DVD-RW/CD-RW combo drive
FLOPPY DRIVE: USB external PCMCIA: 1x Type II
NETWORK: 100Mbps Ethernet
MODEM: 56k v92
OPERATING SYSTEM: Windows XP Home Edition
CONNECTIVITY: 3 x USB, 1 x monitor, 1 x TV-Out, 1x Firewire, 1 x infra-red, 1 x PS/2 (keyboard/mouse), sound (mic, headphone, line-in, S/PDIF, 1 x Secure Digital Reader) PCMCIA: 1 x Type II

CONCLUSION

All in all, the Dell is a nicely rounded and tidy laptop with all the functionality you would expect from any desktop unit. Mobility Radeon 9000 manages to deliver respectable DX8.1 performance, however, it's hard to justify it over the NVIDIA with our

benchmarks. ATI's latest mobile GPU might be able to render pretty frames but that's no use if frame-rate drops to that of a slideshow.

To say we were surprised by the performance of the GeForce4Go 460 is a

total understatement, but the numbers speak for themselves.

The Toshiba is clearly a superior solution for games and entertainment, and while it can't do all the extra effects of the Radeon, its overall performance is much better.

3D PROPHET 9700 PRO

■ Manufacturer: Hercules | Price: £349.99 | Phone: 020 8665 1881
www.hercules.co.uk

**It's the fastest card in the world...
 for a couple of weeks at least**

IT'S BEEN a couple of months since ATI announced its new Radeon 9700 GPU, and this month sees the arrival of the first retail boards. Hercules is probably ATI's largest partner and so this issue we have the 3D Prophet 9700 Pro in all its glory to prod, poke and benchmark to exhaustion.

Unlike the majority of ATI's partners who are using the same red reference boards with their own cooling solutions, Hercules has built its own with the trademark racing green coloured board. The specs themselves are the same, with 128Mb of DDR clocked at 310Mhz (620 effective) and the GPU running at 325Mhz. The cooling comes in the form of a chunky copper fansink – by far the most substantial solution we've seen. One nice touch is that they've added anodised blue aluminium heatsinks to the memory – although it's not necessary to cool RAM running at such speeds it's a nice little addition and will keep things running those few degrees cooler.

The bundle which accompanies the board is one of the best we've seen recently, with the usual manual and drivers, plus a copy of Power DVD and the full two-CD version of *Morrowind* – one of the most shader-intensive games of recent months.

Dropping the card into our testbed we had flashbacks of the notoriously fickle drivers which have previously accompanied new ATI boards, and suffered a series of lock-ups and crashes. One quick upgrade to the 7.77 series cured everything though, but these drivers are still beta and

untested or certified by Microsoft.

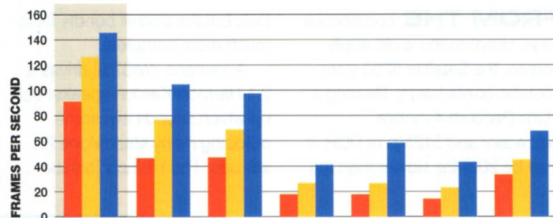
Performance in both the *UT* and *Wolfenstein* benchmarks was nothing short of excellent, standing head and shoulders above every other card we've tested. The convincing margins by which the 9700 chip thrashes NVIDIA's GPUs isn't thanks to anything more than the eight pipelines which the new chips bear – double that of the GeForce4 Ti's and pushing double the pixels of NVIDIA's greatest in every cycle.

Overall, we're massively impressed with the Hercules card, but at double the price of the likes of Ti4600, which itself is probably overkill for many of today's games you have to

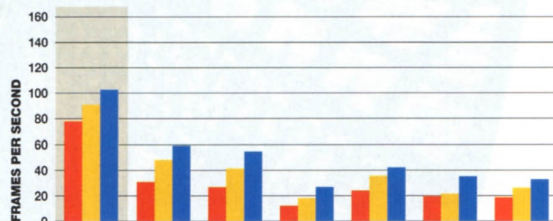
BENCHMARKS

THANKS TO EPIC, WE'RE THE FIRST MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE BRAND NEW UT2003 BENCHMARKING SOFTWARE, WHICH GIVES YOU THE BEST INDICATION OF HOW YOUR CARD IS GOING TO PERFORM IN THE FUTURE...

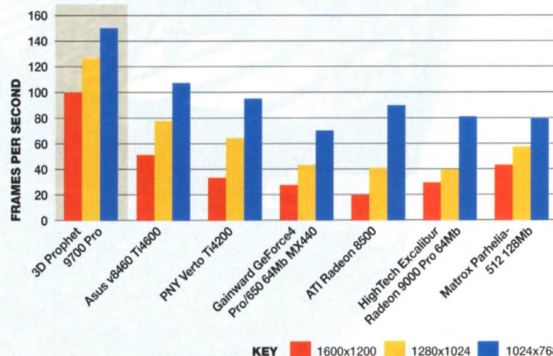
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 (2X AA) FLYBY



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 (2X AA) BOTMATCH



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN CHECKPOINT (2XAA)



KEY 1600x1200 1280x1024 1024x768

wonder whether it's too soon to consider such an investment. Sure, it's the fastest chip out there, but until DirectX9 arrives is there any need for such force?

PCZONE VERDICT 85
 King of the hill

ZM-80 HP

■ Manufacturer: Zalman | Price: £34
 Phone: 0870 321 4620 | www.quietpc.com

No noise and no heat? It's a miracle...

WITH TODAY'S components getting hot enough to fry eggs on, your PC can be extremely noisy. The traditional solution is to whack loads of fans inside your box but aside from making your PC sound like a food processor, it also turns it into a miniature Hoover, coating all your components in an attractive film of dust and insulating hotspots.

The Zalman ZM-80 HP is an alternative. It's a graphics card cooler and it's so new that at

the time of writing the only unit we're aware of in the UK is the one pictured strapped to our reference Ti4600. It consists of a pair of radiators, which are attached to the front and back of the card respectively and joined with a gold-plated heat pipe. One metal block is attached to the top of the GPU to which the front radiator is connected. In between the two goes the heat-pipe which loops around to the back of the card where it is connected to the rear radiator

which itself is elevated from the back of the board. This effectively doubles the surface area available to cool the chip; the heat-pipe is so efficient at transferring heat that both radiators remain within a couple of degrees of one another.

Rather than pussyfoot around with low-end boards we went straight to the top and tested the ZM-80 on the hottest, highest clocked card we could – Ti4600, and the results were extremely impressive. Temperatures fluctuated depending on load but at all times the two radiators were within 3-4 degrees of one another, and at all times both were significantly cooler than the

stock fansinks. Torture tests looping through UT2003 and 3DMark showed no instabilities or signs of visual corruption after several hours running.

Two things to note are space and airflow – using this will prevent you using your first PCI slot, and if your system is messy inside and airflow is bad it could actually cause higher temperatures. Rounded cables or at least good cable management are key in any silently cooled machine.

PCZONE VERDICT 81
 Big, gold and cold



MP3 PLAYERS

MP3 players have finally come of age with massive storage capabilities and superb sound. Steve Spence makes some noise

JUKEBOX 3

■ Manufacturer: Creative Labs | Price: £349.99
Phone: N/A | www.nomadworld.com

The Discman-like Jukebox 3 from Creative is the next step in their family of high-capacity players. The new unit offers ultra-fast 400Mbps Firewire (SB1394) connectivity, and ports are included on Creative's Audigy cards. If you haven't got one of these then it also supports USB, although disappointingly this is limited to v1.1 rather than the speedy v2 standard.

Creative's PlayCenter software handles file and playlist management, and it catalogues all your tunes based on their ID3 tags (the text held inside the MP3 files). This means that a poorly managed collection will end up a mess, but it's easy to rip discs as all the hard work of naming tracks is handled through online archives.

The bundled headphones however are inexcusably poor – why should you pay extra for a decent set when you're shelling



out this much cash? It's like bundling the best hi-fi kit with a set of cheap PC speakers. Use a decent pair and the sound is crisp and clean – just remember to budget this into your spending.

PCZONE VERDICT **84**
Solid and reliable

IPOD

■ Manufacturer: Apple | Price: £399
Phone: 020 8210 1000 | www.apple.com/ipod



This is the smallest of any of the hard drive-based MP3 players we've seen and it's also the most impressive. Even though you could use the Mac version that's been on sale previously, this is the first official Windows-compatible unit, and it's retained the same style and function with a few extra whistles and bells too.

The bundle includes an excellent pair of high-response headphones, plus a wired remote control and belt clip carry case. The scroll wheel no longer rotates, instead sensing motion much like a laptop touchpad. It feels odd at first but with practice is one of the easiest ways to browse large libraries of music.

Rather than port iTunes over for its Windows customers, Apple has a special

version of MusicMatch Jukebox, which acts much like Creative's PlayCenter by ripping CDs and naming tracks through online CDDB archives.

As a Firewire-only device (certain sound and graphics cards come with these built in) initial appeal may seem limited, but considering the low costs of a four-port Firewire card it isn't really an issue. With decent accessories and cans, the total investment could prove lower than that of the Creative or Archos units.

PCZONE VERDICT **91**
Small and perfectly formed, this one's top of its class

JUKEBOX MULTIMEDIA

■ Manufacturer: Archos | Price: £330
Phone: N/A | www.archos.com

Jukebox Multimedia is the Swiss army knife of portable media players, offering support for both normal MP3s as well as the generally problematic Variable Bit-Rate (VBR) files. Thanks to a speedy chip under the hood and small colour screen the device is video-capable too, offering playback support of conventional MPEG and AVI as well as DIVX. Support isn't likely to stop there, with Archos already touting future support of OGG and maybe WMA with future updates that you can just drag and drop onto the Jukebox icon on your PC.

Out of the box the device is USB1.1-compatible, but modular upgrades are available which deliver USB2.0 or Firewire support, both of which make a world of difference in actually getting your files transferred and ready to go. To put things in context the USB1.1 interfaces of the Creative, Archos and Rio all need over 12 hours to shift 20Gb of media in one hit – via USB2.0 or Firewire a similar volume of music would take no more than 10-15 minutes, tops.



Battery life suffers slightly with the addition of a colour screen managing eight to ten hours with MP3 playback, and around four with video. For everyday use this isn't much of a problem, but if you want this kind of player for long trips or holidays it might not make the grade.

PCZONE VERDICT **88**
Versatile and flexible

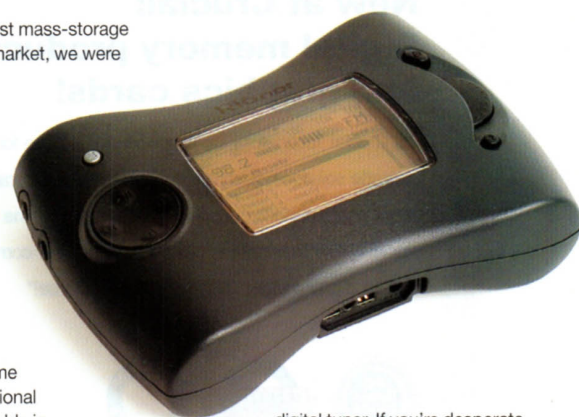
RIO RIOT

■ Manufacturer: SonicBlue | Price: £300
Phone: 0118 963 7420 | www.sonicblue.com

As one of the cheapest mass-storage MP3 players on the market, we were prepared to give the RioRiot a bit of leeway but it still comes out last despite offering a few innovations. Slightly larger than the Jukebox 3, it feels more like a handheld console than an MP3 player. The large monochrome screen is pretty functional but is almost unreadable in bright light.

Playback itself was good but again the bundled headphones are pretty poor and, as with the Archos, the player is hampered by being limited to USB1.1 connectivity. Without the ability to upgrade this, you're going to have to be prepared to set aside half a day to fill the 20Gb unit to capacity.

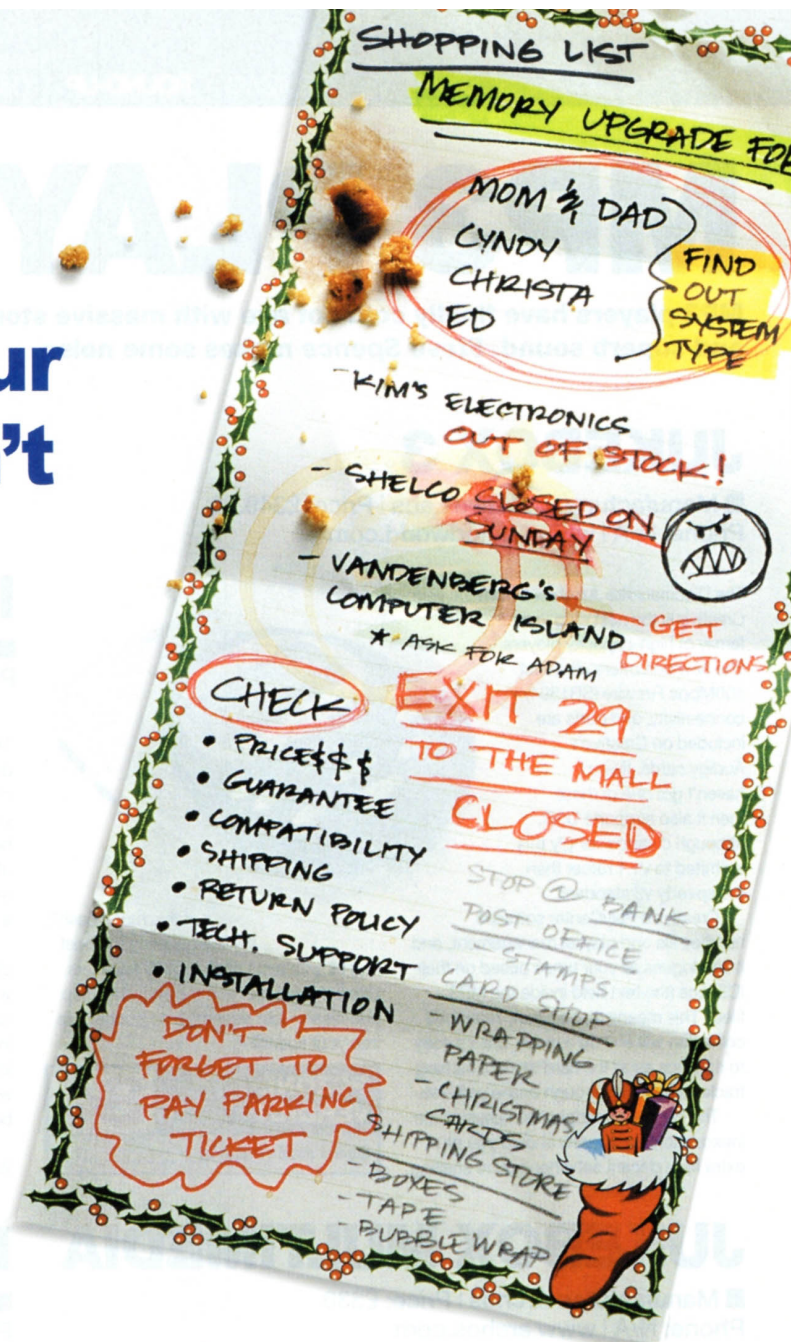
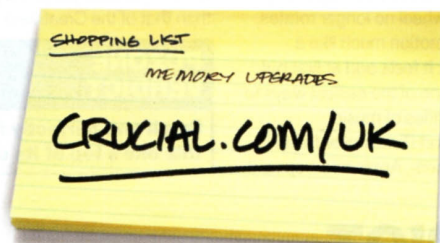
On the bright side, it's the only player that comes with a built-in radio with



digital tuner. If you're desperate for radio on the move then this could be worth considering, but if you're not interested in footy scores and you'd rather listen to your own music than someone else's, this is an also-ran.

PCZONE VERDICT **74**
Anyone remember the Sega Gamegear then?

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A7V8X – GOLD EDITION

■ Manufacturer: ASUS | Price: £122.20 |
Phone: N/A | www.asus.com

**Looking for a new AMD motherboard?
Here's one with bells and whistles**

WITH EVEN more players in the motherboard market than there are videocard manufacturers, buying the basis for any upgrade can be a pretty confusing process. Thankfully there are a few top names who produce consistently good products, and of that number, ASUS sits near the top.

While their graphics cards are generally not dissimilar from the reference designs, their motherboards are packed with innovation and the A7V8X is no exception. Based on the VIA KT400 chipset supporting AthlonXP and Duron CPUs with DDR400 and AGP8x, the chipset is one of the newest out there – only beaten to the

AGP8x/DDR400 milestone by NVIDIA's nForce2.

It's worth noting that the board comes in a number of flavours and while we're looking at the A7V8X Gold, which sits top of the pile there are a number of other models with certain features omitted.

USB2.0 and IEEE-1394 Firewire are both present, as is six-channel audio with S/PDIF in/out connectors, but ASUS have something far more impressive up their sleeves. This is the first desktop board with Gigabit LAN (1000Mbps networking) and Serial-ATA.

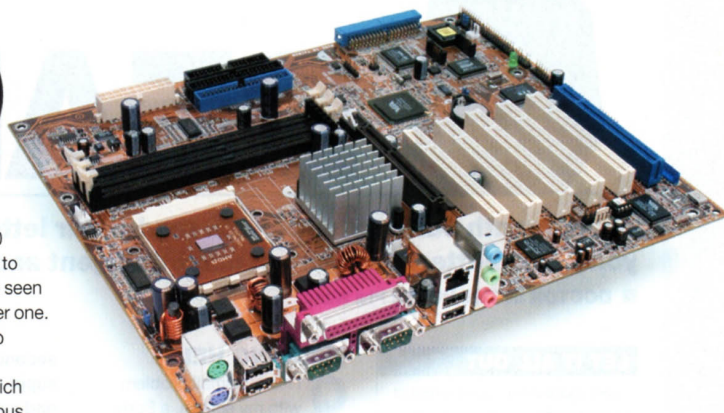
Benchmarking against other AMD platforms including the previous top, KT333 produced

some very impressive numbers. Using XMS3200 Corsair DDR400 RAM, up to ten per cent margins were seen over VIA's previous number one. These margins are likely to increase further with the upcoming Athlon XPs, which boast increased 166Mhz bus speeds and are due out later this year – for which this board is already compatible.

As icing on this high-octane cake, ASUS also include a copy of their WinCinema suite, a set of four applications which allow you to watch DVDs as well as rip MP3s and encode/edit video.

With the exception of nForce2 motherboards, which

are still a month away at least, we reckon ASUS's newest offering for AMD users is a pretty sweet thing. And the best news is that it's likely to support all the current and future connectivity standards you'll need, over the next year or so at least.



**PCZONE
VERDICT** **87**

**Top Taiwanese
technology**

P4S8X GOLD

■ Manufacturer: ASUS | Price: £117.50 | Phone: N/A
www.asus.com

**Sticking with Intel inside? Here's a motherboard
to get top performance from your chip**

OF COURSE AMD users shouldn't be allowed all the fun, and for the Intel-inclined out there, ASUS has the P4S8X Gold, based on SiS648. Designed for both the 400Mhz and 533Mhz socket 478 P4s, this motherboard is crammed with new widgets and is more advanced than many of Intel's own.

Like i845G, SiS648 offers support for the latest DDR333, however additional bios settings will allow the memory to be driven even quicker, right up to 400Mhz. Six USB2.0 and a pair of IEEE-

1394 connectors are present, as is Serial ATA (see boxout) guaranteeing support for the next generation of hard drives which are just over the horizon. On-board 100Mbit networking and six-channel sound join the party, and technically mean the only card needed to get this board running is one in the AGP – everything else is catered for.

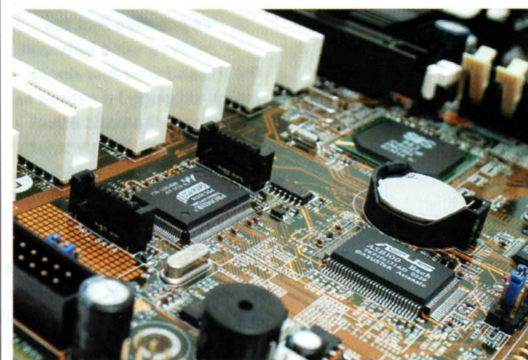
While AGP 8x cards may be thin on the ground, the board is

fully AGP3.0 compliant and as this month's news indicates, you won't need a DirectX9 GPU to be using the masses of extra bandwidth the new standard delivers.

Running the board with a 2.8Ghz 533FSB Pentium 4 in Windows XP was extremely impressive, stability wasn't far off what we have come to expect from the premium Intel motherboards and performance was par for the course. A little bit of tweaking was

SERIAL ATA: SO WHAT IS IT?

**BOTH OF THESE MOTHERBOARDS HAVE SERIAL
ATA, WHICH MEANS FASTER HARD DRIVES**



While IDE may be fine with current hard drives, the limitations of this ageing technology are becoming very clear.

Serial ATA ups the maximum data transfer from 100Mbytes/sec to 150Mbytes/sec which might not seem like much but that's only the start – 300Mbyte/sec and 600Mbyte/sec versions

are already in the pipeline. Cabling is much simpler too, instead of being limited by a maximum of 40cm of fat ribbon cable Serial ATA uses eight-conductor rounded cabling which will run up to a metre long. This will not only tidy your PC up, but also eliminate one of the biggest culprits of poor airflow and overheating.

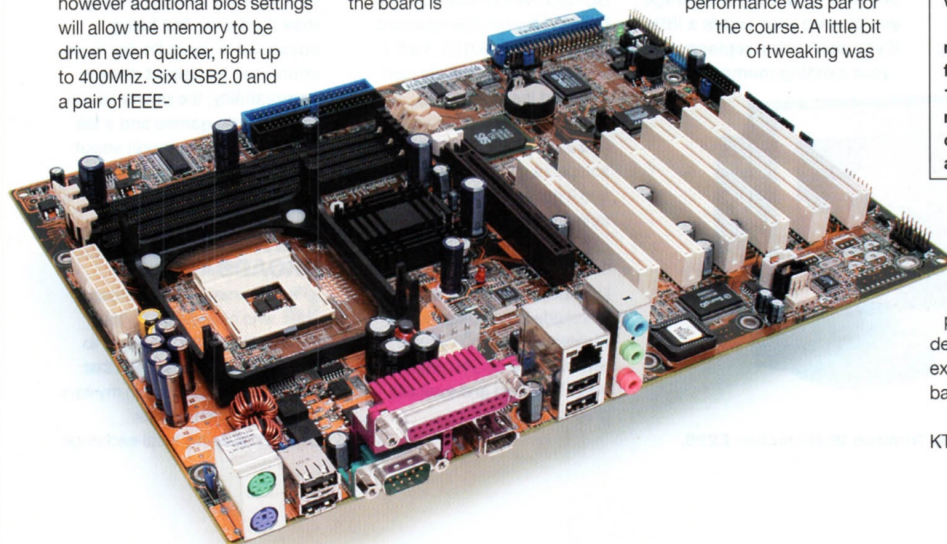
needed to get the bios to play ball with the memory, and running at DDR333 we saw performance close to that delivered by typically more expensive PC800-RAMBUS-based platforms.

Oh, and as with the AMD KT400 offering, ASUS has

included its ASUS WinCinema suite that lets you rip CDs and encode video on your new system, which puts the icing on the cake.

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **80**

Pukka P4





DEAR WANDY

Every month our resident quack reads your letters and solves your problems. Think you know better? Write in, sound intelligent and win yourself £50

■ DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE Phil Wand

LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type thing.

Write to Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Email Address your letters to us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

FLICKING HELL

Q I have a small problem with my screen, a Sony Trinitron Multiscan E220. I've had it for about two years, and recently it has started to flicker near the bottom corners of the screen. I used to have a room that backed onto the kitchen, and it did the same thing whenever someone used the microwave. It didn't seem to do any harm. From day one, it has made a noise like a very short ruler plunked on the edge of a desk whenever it powered up, but it has always been as good as gold. Is my screen about to explode or something? Please help.

Colin Elliott

A It's possible that the cable running between the PC and your monitor is faulty, although I'd expect to see a more dramatic effect on the display. Gently twist the cable where it enters the D-shape connectors and see if this affects the flickering. If so, replace the cable. But a more likely explanation is that your monitor is on its way out. Although I can't promise it will expire peacefully, the damage was caused by the oven (you say the interference you see now matches that caused by the oven) and is thus unlikely to be an electrical fault. Microwave ovens chuck out enormous amounts of electromagnetic interference, the magnetron inside them is essentially a radio wave transmitter producing RF energy in excess of 2,000 million cycles per

second. A pulsed power supply feeds the transmitter and causes interference, so make sure the only thing that goes near a microwave is on a plate.

DOUBLE GIGAHERTZ

Q I have a 500MHz Pentium III, 320Mb RAM, Gladiac Ultra GeForce2 and Windows 98. I'm thinking of upgrading to 2.2GHz, can you suggest a good processor? I'd also like to upgrade my mobo, but I'm not totally sure about compatibility between processor and motherboard. Could you please suggest two that are compatible and powerful?

James Poskett

A There are a number of factors affecting your decision here. The first is memory. Given that you have an old Intel chip, your RAM will either be PC100 or PC133 168-pin SDRAM. If you want to transfer it to your new board, the choices are limited. My recommendation here would be the PC-Chips M841L board, which has two slots for older style PC133 SDRAM, which you have, two more for DDR DRAM, and support for the Athlon XP 1500 to 1900. OK, so that's not quite on the 2.2GHz target, but the money you'll save on not having to buy new RAM may encourage you to drop your sights a little. If you don't mind replacing your existing memory, things



Wandy's most recent lust object, the Asus A7M266-D.

get more interesting. If you want to hold back on the pennies, the Gigabyte GA-7VTXH, which you'll also find in our Buyer's Guide, is sound value. If you've recently bumped off an Aunt and don't mind throwing the cash about, try the dual Athlon Asus A7M266-D and upgrade to 2000 or XP Pro. Check our brand new improved Buyer's Guide for the best motherboards you can buy for either AMD or Intel processors.

POOR PROPHET

Q I've recently acquired a Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 TV Out 64Mb graphics card at what I thought was a good price. I felt this was an even better buy when I found out it was your Best Budget item for quite a while. I thought I'd compare the old card (NVIDIA GeForce 256 DDR 32Mb) with the new card using 3DMark2001SE. Well, I was astonished. The old card trounced the 3D Prophet, repeatedly scoring between 2500 and 2600 points. The 3D Prophet scraped a dismal 1700 points and it got worse when I started trying different drivers (eg the combined Win2K-XP driver and the PowerVR reference drivers). I've updated the AGP driver but this made little difference. So to restore my faith in your reviews, how do you prepare your PC to test and evaluate graphics cards?

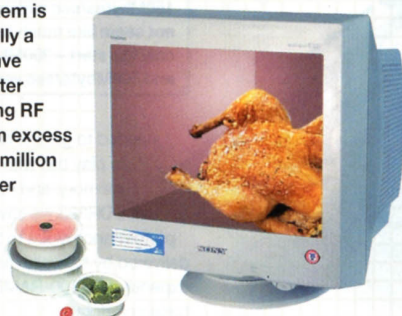
Craig

A I'd expect the 3D Prophet to give a poor showing in 3DMark2001 as it's a heavy-handed DirectX 8 benchmark. Compared with 3DMark2000, the updated version is a total bastard to your hardware, containing tests that require hardware transform and lighting – a feature set the Kryo II doesn't have. Nevertheless, the £45 Hercules card (along with our new Best Budget entry, the Excalibur Radeon 900 Pro) remains in front in terms of price against performance. I'm surprised to hear your plain vanilla GeForce beats it. On higher resolutions, the Kryo II should leave it behind, and instead run neck and neck with the likes of the more expensive GeForce 2MX. But if the truth be known, I'm bored by benchmarks. Number-hungry Max Power fans love the idea of ranking their hardware, but being advanced in years I'm far more impressed by decent drivers, compatibility, the power to run my favourite games and a fair price. Before you laugh about freebies for journals, I buy all my hardware. So there.

WAITING FOR BROADBAND

Q Like many other PC users who have a 56K tortoise stuck in their PC, I am eager to surf the Internet at speeds that will cause the wind to pin my ears back and flatten my hair. Unfortunately, my local exchange

"When I play Tony Hawk's 2, the PC refuses to load the textures making the game look grey and blobby"



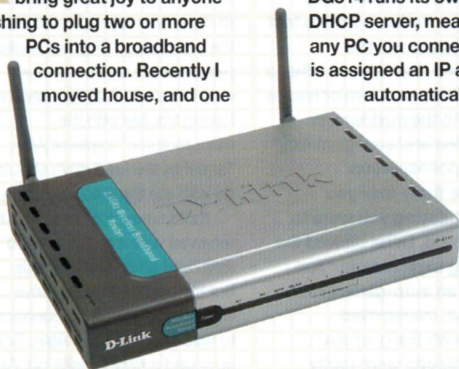
Colin Elliott's innovative Sony Trinitron Multichicken E220.

"Is it as simple as it sounds, just plug in the network cards and router and away you go, or is there more to it?"

is not yet Broadband enabled. While I sit and watch the pre-registration counter rise at the rate of one per decade, I ponder the best way to use my broadband connection when I finally get it. I have (at present) two PCs, each with a 56K tortoise. Only one can connect to the Internet at a time using my normal phone line. I would love to network the PCs together and connect over ADSL so both can surf at the same time. While I understand the theory behind this connection, I'm lacking in practical knowledge and I've read that I'll need an Ethernet network card for each PC and an ADSL router. Is it as simple as it sounds, just plug in the network cards and router and away you go?

Doug Kieran

A I have a story that should bring great joy to anyone wishing to plug two or more PCs into a broadband connection. Recently I moved house, and one



If you fancy ditching your 56K modem, check out our guide to installing wireless broadband on page 108.

of the first things I wanted at the new gaff was ADSL. So I telephoned BT to discover whether my local exchange was ADSL enabled, and it was. I opted for the BTopenworld Plug & Go kit, which is where BT set up your connection at their end and leave all the rest up to you. No fuss, no engineer in blue overalls with dog mess on his boots demanding sugar in his tea, nothing. I paid just £6 for a microfilter – a small box

that allows you to use a regular phone over the upgraded ADSL connection – and was told the line would be ready in five working days. Although this phrase seemed a contradiction in terms for BT, it remained an exciting prospect. But I needn't have scoffed. Four days later the microfilter arrived in a jiffy bag, and a separate package contained my login details and some leaflets that were glossy and smelt nice. As I'd opted to get my own modem rather than the one on offer from BT, I went and bought myself a Netgear DG814, which integrates an ADSL modem and a 10/100 four-port switch, for about £109 plus VAT. I ran standard patch cables from network cards in each machine to the ports on the switch, and then powered everything up. The DG814 runs its own DHCP server, meaning any PC you connect to it is assigned an IP address automatically, so

there's no mucking about making sure each machine has a unique number – it's all done for you. There's a smart, web-based interface to configure the thing with your BT login details, after which the cogs start turning and you can surf the night away from any computer on the network. It really was just as BT promised: plug and go. For more information on broadband, and instructions on how to set up a

wireless network in three easy steps, turn to page 108.

STAYING PCI

Q Last year I bought a budget computer from emachines and I have been moderately happy with its performance. Recently I've had problems with playing games from the shops and from your cover disks. For



The 82810 wasn't designed with hardcore gamers in mind.

example, when I play *Tony Hawk's 2*, the PC refuses to load the textures making the game look grey and blobby and totally unplayable. Do I need to get myself a decent graphics card, because I'm aware that my hardware is using a lot of my memory up. I have an emachines 330 with a CN810 mobo, an Intel Celeron 996, 128Mb RAM, integrated Intel 82810 graphics controller and I'm running Windows XP Home Edition. Please help, I'm totally stumped!

Simon Roth

A As integrated graphics go, the Intel 82810 ain't too bad. But it ain't that hot either. Since its release in 1999, the technology it contains has been vaulted many times over, and you should look to replace it with a budget level NVIDIA product like the GeForce2. The only trouble I see you having is that, as far as I am aware, motherboards with your chipset didn't have a separate AGP slot, which restricts you somewhat. If you want to keep your existing mobo,

which you probably do, the only option you have is to go for a PCI video card. Several people with the same problem have asked if they should opt for the old Riva TNT cards rather than the later GeForce ones, and the answer's a definite "no". If you've been reading these pages regularly you'll know that PCI based GeForce2 MX hardware exists for around the £45 mark.

CHOOSEY GEFORCE

Q I'm in need of your wisdom. I want to get a durable, long-life graphics card. Is there much difference between a Ti4400 and a Ti4600? Is it worth shelling out the extra hard-earned cash on the 4600? I have a Dell Pentium 4, 1.7GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM. How do I know if I require AGP or PCI? Will the card even fit – I've heard it's very big. Does this mean I might have to shuffle things around in my case (sound card, for example)? I've also heard the fans are insufficient, can you shed any

light on this? And finally, is there any difference between say, the Creative GeForce4 and the VisionTek?

Eric Lynch

A In all honesty, whatever graphics card you end up with is never going to be fast enough. Like everyone else you'll spend the money, max out the detail settings, and be disappointed that the thing still splutters. So you'll always be looking at the next model up, and in the world of technology there's always something better just around the corner. My advice depends on how long you intend keeping the card. If it's going to be a stop-gap thing, go for the bottom-rung Ti4200 and save yourself £100 in the process. If you're not worried by spending serious amounts of money, go for the Asus or VisionTek Ti4600 cards, as they benchmark consistently out front. Don't worry about size or cooling, it won't be a problem.

LOPSIDED

I read your suggestion in issue #120 to Nick Millership. I think that you might have missed something that also exhibits those symptoms. You suggested a virus, and although that's the first port of call, there's something called Lop.com, which does the same but remains invisible to virus scanners. Information about Lop.com and how to remove it can be found at www.spywareinfo.com/lop.html. In addition to a virus scanner, I use Lavasoft's Ad-aware program, which can be found at www.lavasoft.de. As for Anon's complaint about a slow download speed, there's a possible trick you missed – fooling the modem connection into higher speeds. It does work, and at 115,200 I can get download speeds of 4.5K a sec. To do this, go to Start, Settings, Control Panel, Modems. Select your modem, and click Properties. Under General, select the Maximum Speed to be 115,200. Finally, as a side note, M's complaint about running Windows 2000 on 128Mb of RAM, well, it can actually run on 32Mb, but it's a bit slow if you have alpha blending effects on.

NeoThermic

Wandy says: I've used Ad-aware for some time now (partnered with their Refupdate tool, which helps keeps the program up-to-date). Be careful running it if you're a KaZaA user, because by removing all the spyware on your system there's a high chance you'll bork it.



WATCHDOG

It's your chance to share your anger on the the pages of PC ZONE by letting us know which companies have been treating you badly. Enjoy...

■ WRITING THE WRONGS Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you've reached the end of your tether. If you have a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

READ ME!

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure that you also include all **purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

"Scan arranged a swap onsite but Alan was dismayed to find the new one was faulty as well"

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Reader Craig Wallace ordered a Pioneer DVD-RW A03 from Special Reserve, which he selected from their July/August club magazine. After spending £400, it promptly turned up: "The only problem was they had sent a Pioneer A04 instead of the advertised A03," says Craig. "But having spoken to Pioneer prior to my order, they had said the A03 had been discontinued. So my first impressions were that Special Reserve had sent me an upgraded model."

Then he received the new club magazine only to find his drive advertised for £279.99, much less than he'd been charged. He phoned Special Reserve and was told there shouldn't be a problem with a refund of the difference but this would need to be verified with a director first.

Craig heard nothing for three days until a letter arrived saying that since he had bought the drive five weeks previously, the prices on both units had dropped. "It stated that due to the length of time that I'd had the product, and due to the fact that they were not notified of the dispatch error at the time, they were unable to offer any refund," explains a very unhappy Craig.

Over to Special Reserve: "Unfortunately it would appear that Mr Wallace received the A04 as the result of a despatch error, as the Pioneer DRVA03 was in stock at the time," says a spokesperson for the company. "Despatch errors do occur and had he notified us on receipt, or within a reasonable period of time, we would have collected the incorrect item and replaced it." They say that because you did not contact them until some seven weeks after receipt, "we could not take any action at that late stage." However the good news is that the bods at Special Reserve are going to offer a refund of the price difference as a gesture of goodwill because you are a long-standing member.



The Pioneer A04. Or is it the A03? Or... errr...

THE GOOD SON

God bless Paul. The perfect son who decided to build his folks a PC. All he needed was a new motherboard and some extra memory. He ordered these from Dabs but on receiving them, he realised the processor he already had wouldn't work with the new motherboard so he ordered a new processor as well. This duly turned up but the motherboard and chip didn't get on. At all.

So he sent the chip back but Dabs' engineers said it was fine and perhaps the problem was with the motherboard. "At this point I requested to return the motherboard using Dabs' online returns form," explains Paul. "I received an e-mail from them on July 22 stating: 'We confirm that we have authorised the return of the following goods for refund and not repair.'"

So thinking he would get a refund, Paul went and bought another motherboard from Dabs. After slapping it all together, the computer worked fine.

Things are never that easy though – Paul received a report from a Dabs engineer saying the original motherboard should work just fine with the processor. "Maybe it's the processor that's

at fault,' said the report," recalls Paul. "I got in touch with Dabs' customer services, and told them the processor I have is fine (tested by their own engineers); that I have since bought another motherboard, which also works fine; and that I have absolutely no use for a motherboard which I found to be faulty – especially when I have already bought a replacement because I thought I was to be refunded for the previous one!"

Phew! Off to Dabs then to get their side of the story. They confirm that you did place two separate online orders and that they inspected returned items to check for faults but they found none: "The use of an alternative motherboard to test the CPU supports the suggestion that there is either a compatibility problem or issues relating to the customer's installation and configuration," says a spokesperson.

As for the e-mail you received saying you were to get a refund, Dabs offered the following explanation: "The email is an auto-generated response, transmitted because Mr Berry stated that his goods were faulty in his return request. On testing, the goods weren't found to be faulty which explains our stance."

However, in recognition that this may have caused confusion, they will, on this occasion treat the issue as a special case. Hope it's all OK.

OVERHEATING & ANGRY

Stephen Attaway sent us a long, steaming e-mail about the problems he has experienced with his new(ish) Simply computer. His PC needed to be sent back five times to get

everything working properly – there was a problem with overheating that Steve managed to figure out before Simply's engineers did. "All seems fine now but they won't return my e-mails as I have asked them to at least extend the first year's warranty as for most of the time I have had the system – at least five months of the year – it's been back with them," roars Stephen.

Watchdog spoke to Simply who said they would like to know who you have been e-mailing about your warrant issues. They also say they will happily extend your warranty.

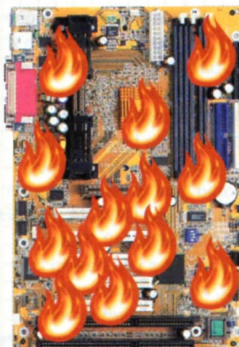
HARD TIMES

Reader Alan Sim bought a hard drive from Scan more than a year ago. The drive came with a three-year warranty, which was handy because it recently became faulty. He phoned Scan who informed him that he needed to contact the manufacturer directly. But the manufacturer said no and claimed it was down to Scan who agreed to take back the hard drive. "Over six weeks passed and I contacted them only to be told that they had been having trouble with the manufacturer," explains Alan, "and that the hard drive should be with me the following week."

It did arrive but "what I had received was a reconditioned IBM hard drive. Not only this but the part of the hard drive where the power lead connects to was broken," says Alan. Scan arranged a swap onsite but Alan was dismayed to find that the new one was faulty as well.

He contacted Scan again and was told he would have to return the hard drive at his own expense: "I have e-mailed them and said I am not happy to pay for the return of something that was faulty when I received it and have yet to get a response."

We contacted Scan who says the original drive was shipped with a three-year warranty but "as stipulated by the Sale of Goods Act, only the first year of the warranty is honoured



Motherboards – all hell can break loose over them if you're not careful...

THE ACCUSED

dabs
com

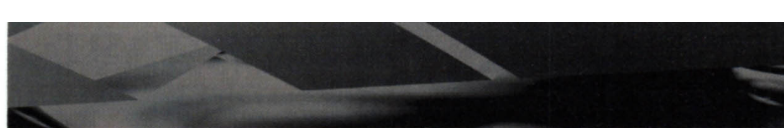
SCAN

Simply

ebuyer



GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT



SAINTS NOT SINNERS

technomatic

▲ EVEN A BLIND SQUIRREL FINDS AN ACORN EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE...

A Mr A M Boylan is a very happy punter. And who can blame him after the service he received from Technomatic? "I was looking for a new graphics card," explains Boylan. "I particularly wanted one with 128Mb of memory so I went round several sites and discovered that Technomatic were selling the Gainward version at £146.86. Most impressed, I ordered it."

All was fine until the card turned up with only 64 meg: "I rang them and got through straight away," recalls Boylan. "I spoke to a lady named Vicky McMinn and she asked me to copy my confirming e-mail, which I did."

He then received a phone call back confirming that there had been some sort of error with the webpage – the product number was for the 64Mb version, as was the price, but it was clear he had ordered the 128Mb version retailing at £40 more. "As I ordered in good faith, they would collect the 64Mb card the very next day and order me the 128Mb card at no extra cost."

Which is nice. Boylan rounds off by stating that he wants "to say a public thank you to Technomatic for their attention to customer care and secondly to let some of the companies who appear in your pages know exactly what customer care is meant to be all about."

technomatic

Finally, a company that bends over backwards to help customers. Without Watchdog having to bite it on the ass...

directly by the seller," offered Scan. It's their understanding that the manufacturer was no longer offering a three-year warranty, "so in the interests of customer service, we agreed to accept the hard drive back even though it was 15 months after purchase, which we were under no legal obligation to do." In regards to the original faulty hard drive, Scan offered the following explanation: "We sent the unit to the German manufacturer on Mr Sim's behalf. Unfortunately they wouldn't provide us with a replacement hard drive. We therefore replaced it with a higher specification IBM unit at our own expense, in an attempt to keep our customer happy."

They accept the hard drive was damaged in transit and say they quickly replaced it with a brand new drive: "Incredibly, upon delivery, this hard drive was also faulty," exclaims Scan. "We accepted this back under our priority

returns policy and from the date of receipt it took three days for a replacement to be dispatched. Once the goods had been received, we called Mr Sim and he expressed his satisfaction with the new drive along with its new three-year warranty." Scan says they can understand your frustration: "We ship thousands of orders a week and such unfortunate events rarely happen – in fact, we shared his frustration. However, I believe we have gone above and beyond any legal requirements in trying to resolve Mr Sim's problems." They say the only real delay in the process was incurred while waiting for a replacement from the manufacturer – which they say was a situation beyond their control. In this case, Watchdog reckons Scan has done everything it can to resolve your problems, Alan.

E-BUYERS BEWARE!

We received a complaint from Steve Barney about his experiences with E-Buyer. He says he's had problems with motherboards bought from the 'e-tailer' and he's not happy with their attitude towards his complaints. We sent through his rant to their customer services but unlike every other company this month, they didn't get back to us. We also recall the time they didn't bother getting back to us at all with a previous complaint. Are we impressed with them? Should you buy from them? Well, we'll let you make up your own minds. **EW**



The hard drive is quite clearly a delicate piece of equipment if Alan's experiences are anything to go by...



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<p>A = 01</p> <p>Actua Soccer Age of Emp. 2: Conqueror Age of Emp. Rise of Rome Age of Empires Age of Empires 2 Age of Wonders 2 Airport Inc Airport Tycoon Alien vs Predator Alien vs Predator (Gold) Alien vs Predator 2 Allied Assault: M. of Hon. Alone in the Dark 4 America Anno 1602 Army Men 2 Army Men RTS Army Men: Toys in Space Army Men: World War Atlantis 3: New World</p> <p>B = 02</p> <p>Baldur's G.: Sword Coast Baldur's G. 2: Sh. of Amn Baldur's G. 2: Thr. of Bhaal Baldur's Gate Battle Realms Black & White Black & White: Creat. Isle Blade Runner Blood Omen 2 Blue Shift Broken Sword 1 Broken Sword 2</p> <p>C = 03</p> <p>C&C: Red Alert C&C: Red Alert 2 C&C: Red Alert 2 Y's Rev. C&C: Renegade C&C: Tiberian Sun C. Wolfenstein, Return to Caesar 3 Carnageddon 1 & 2 Carnivores: Ice Age Champ. Manager 2001 Champ. Manager 2002 Champ. Manager 3 Champ. Manager 97 Champ. Manager 98 Champ. Manager 99 Chasm: The Rift Chicken Run Civilization 1, 2 & 3 Clive Barker's Undying Codename: Outbreak Colin McRae Rally 2 Comanche 4 Command & Conquer Commandos 2 Commandos B.E. Lines Cossacks: The Art of War Cossacks: European Wars Counterstrike (Half Life) Crusaders of M&M Curse of Monkey Island Cutthroats</p> <p>D = 04</p> <p>Dark Age of Camelot Deep Space 9 Delta Force 1 & 2 Delta Force: T. F. Dagger Desperados Deus-Ex Diablo Diablo 2 Die Hard Nakatomi Plaza Disciples 2 Dark Prophecy Discworld Noir Doom Driver Duke Nukem 3D Duke Nukem: Manhattan Dune 2000 Dungeon Keeper 1 & 2 Dungeon Siege</p> <p>E = 05</p> <p>Earth 2150 Earthworm Jim 1 Empire Earth Escape Monkey Island Extreme Assault</p> <p>F = 06</p> <p>F-22 Air Dominance FA PLgue Fball Man.'00 FA PLgue Fball Man.'02 Fallout 2 Fargate Fast Food Tycoon</p>	<p>G = 07</p> <p>Gabriel Knight 3 Galactic Battlegrounds Gangsters Gangsters 2 Global Operations Gore Gothic G-Police Grand Prix 3 Grand Prix 4 Grand Theft Auto Grand Theft Auto 2 Grand Theft Auto 3 Grandia 2 Grim Fandango Ground Control GTA: London 1969</p> <p>H = 08</p> <p>Half Life Half Life: Blue Shift Half Life: Counterstrike Half Life: Opposing Force Half Life: Team Fortress Harry Potter Heist Heroes of M&M III Hexen 2 Hidden & Dangerous Hitman Hitman 2: Silent Assassin Hogs of War Homeworld Hooligans: Storm Europe</p> <p>I = 09</p> <p>I.G.I. (Project) Ice Wind Dale Imperialism 2 Imperium Galactica 2 Int. Cricket Captain</p> <p>J = 10</p> <p>Jedi Knight Jedi Knight 2 Jedi Knight: Myst. of Sith Jekyll & Hyde</p> <p>K = 11</p> <p>Kick Off 2 Kingpin Klingon Honor Guard Knights and Merchants</p> <p>L = 12</p> <p>Leave Game (Diablo) Lego Island Lego Racers Lego Rock Raiders London Racer Longest Journey</p> <p>M = 13</p> <p>Madden NFL 2001 Madden NFL 2002 Mafia Mall Tycoon Master of Olympus Master Rallye Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX Max Payne MDK 1 & 2 Mech Commander Mech Commander 2 Medal of Honor: All. Ass. Medieval: Total War Men in Black Merc. Benz Truck Racing Merchant Prince 2 Metal Fatigue Metal Gear Solid Microsoft Flight Sim 2000 Microsoft Train Simulator Midtown Madness Midtown Madness 2 Might & Magic 7 & 8 Mob Rule</p>	<p>N = 14</p> <p>Monopoly Monopoly Tycoon Monsters Inc Morrowind Moto Racer Moto Racer 3 Motocross Madness Motocross Madness 2 Motor City Online Mummy Myst Myst 3 Mysteries of the Sith</p> <p>O = 15</p> <p>Official Formula 1 Racing Oil Tycoon Omikron: Nomad Soul Oni Op. Desert Hammer Op. Flashpoint Resistance Operation Bodycount Operation Flashpoint Original War Outlive</p> <p>P = 16</p> <p>Pof Radiance: M. Drannor Panzer General 2 Pharaoh Pizza Syndicate Planescape Torment Pokemon Trading Card Populous: The Beginning Premier Manager 3 Project IGI</p> <p>Q = 17</p> <p>Quake 3</p> <p>R = 18</p> <p>Railroad Tycoon Railroad Tycoon 2 Rayman 2 RC Tycoon C'screw Follies Red Alert (C&C) Red Alert 2 Red Faction Renegade Resident Evil Return to C. Wolfenstein Ravenous Roller Coaster Tycoon Rugby 2001 Rune</p> <p>S = 19</p> <p>S. Wars: Force Comm. Schizm Screamers 4x4 Seadogs Septerra Core Serious Sam Settlers 2, 3 & 4 Shadow Force: Razor Unit Shogun: Total War Sim City Sim City 2000 Sim City 3000 Sim Golf Sims Sims Hot Date Sims House Party Sims Livin' It Up Sims on Holiday Ski Resort Tycoon 2 Soldier of Fortune Soldier of Fortune 2 Soul Reaver Soul Reaver 2 Spiderman Spiderman The Movie Sports Car GT Star Trek Starship Creator Star Trek: Armada 2 Star Trek: Elite Force Star Trek: Generations Star Wars: Battle Naboo Star Wars: Clone Camps Star Wars: Dark Forces</p>	<p>T = 20</p> <p>Tactical Ops: Ass. Terror Test Drive 5 The Italian Job The Mummy Theme Hospital Theme Park Inc Theme Park World Thief: Dark Project Tiberian Sun Tiberian Sun: Firestorm Tiger Woods TOCA Touring Cars 2 Tom Clancy: Desert Siege Tom Clancy: Ghost Recon Tom Clancy: Rainbow Six Tom Clancy: Rogue Spear Tom Clancy: Sum of Fear Tomb Raider 2 Tomb Raider 3 Tomb Raider 4 Tomb Raider 5 Tony Hawk's 2 Total Annihilation Train Simulator Transport Tycoon Tropico Turk 2</p> <p>U = 21</p> <p>Ultimate Soccer Man. 98 Unreal Tournament</p> <p>V = 22</p> <p>Vietnam 2 Vietnam: Black Ops Warcraft 3: R. of Chaos Warrior Kings Wolfenstein 3D World War 3: Black Gold</p> <p>W = 23</p> <p>Zeus: Master of Olympus Zoo Tycoon Zoo Tycoon Dinosaur Dig</p> <p>X = 24</p> <p>911: Fire & Rescue</p>
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BUYER'S GUIDE

We've performed massive surgery on our Buyer's Guide to give you an even clearer picture of what makes up the dream games machine. We've got three categories for each component, giving you the best performer, the best buy and the best budget. If you think we've got something wrong, email us at letters@pczone.co.uk, and if we print your suggestion we'll give you a GeForce 5 card from Gainward

BEST PERFORMANCE

BEST BUY

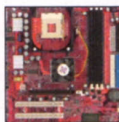
BEST BUDGET

INTEL MOTHERBOARD

**P4T-533**

STREET PRICE £139.82
MANUFACTURER ASUS
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.asus.com

Following the success of its Intel-850-based P4T, ASUS release a revision based on the i850e chipset for the new 533MHz FSB Pentium 4s. With support for PC1066 RAMBUS and AGP4x, the P4T-533 manages to stand head and shoulders above the competition thanks to clever board design and high-quality components. If you have to have the best then you have to have this.

**845E MAX2-BLR**

STREET PRICE £124.54
MANUFACTURER Microstar International
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

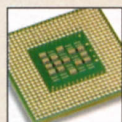
The Max2-BLR from MSI is one of the most rounded Intel 845E packages we've seen. Based on the newest revision of the DDR-supporting chipset for the latest 533MHz FSB chips, MSI have brought in some clever extras including onboard 5.1 sound. The addition of Bluetooth will allow wireless connectivity to enabled gadgets, plus readiness for the wide range of peripherals on their way.

**GA-8IEX**

STREET PRICE £92.82
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

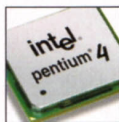
Just because you're working to a tight budget, don't think you have to settle for second best. If you're after an entry-level Pentium 4 then you could do worse than check out the excellent GA-8IEX from Gigabyte. Along with support for the new 500MHz FSB chips and DDR memories comes integrated Creative 5.1 sound and 10/100 network plus six USB2.0. For under £100 you can't do better.

INTEL PROCESSOR

**PENTIUM 4 'B' 2.8GHZ**

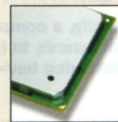
STREET PRICE £467.65
MANUFACTURER Intel
TELEPHONE 01793 403 000
WEBSITE www.intel.co.uk

The 2800MHz Pentium 4 is scarily fast. Coupled with T14600 on our test box, frame-rates never once dipped below the 100fps mark in all the games we played. Using the new 533MHz front-side bus, these new 'Northwood' Pentium 4s have double the on-chip cache of their 'Willamette' predecessors – if you've a motherboard new enough to support one and money to burn you won't find anything quicker.

**PENTIUM 4 'A' 2GHZ**

STREET PRICE £158.62
MANUFACTURER Intel
TELEPHONE 01793 403 000
WEBSITE www.intel.co.uk

Pentium 4 'A' (or the 'Northwood' core as it is known) has doubled the cache of the previous-generation chips. Based on a 400MHz bus, the 2GHz chip is compatible with any of the i845/e i850/e motherboards and would be more than respectable in any gaming system. Look at the price difference between this and the top-end Intel chip on the left. Frightening isn't it?

**CELERON 1.8GHZ**

STREET PRICE £69.32
MANUFACTURER Intel
TELEPHONE 01793 403 000
WEBSITE www.intel.co.uk

With one quarter the cache of the newest Pentium 4s, the Celeron 1800MHz may not seem like it's got the necessary guts for a decent gaming system but nothing could be further from the truth. At entry level these chips are a cost-effective way of getting an i845e/i850e system together, which can be upgraded to P4 later simply by swapping chips. It's a brilliant compromise solution.

AMD MOTHERBOARD

**A7V8X**

STREET PRICE £136.29
MANUFACTURER ASUS
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.asus.com

While some motherboard revisions are little more than a refresh to support new families of processor, boards like the A7V8X are a real quantum leap in their class. Packed with new features including DDR400 support, Gigabit LAN and support for the new hot-pluggable Serial ATA the new ASUS board is in a league of its own. Coupled with a cheapish AMD processor, this is the cheapest route to the top end.

**K7N420PRO**

STREET PRICE £83.42
MANUFACTURER Microstar International
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

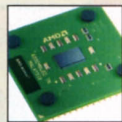
As the top nForce board, the K7N420Pro from MSI beat every KT266/266A offering we put it against. Add to the great performance an integrated GeForce2MX graphics chip plus separate AGP 4x slot, 100Mbit LAN, integrated 5.1 sound, and you'll agree it's perfect for seasoned enthusiasts and first-time gamers alike. Watch out for the nForce 2 boards, arriving next month though.

**GA-7TXX**

STREET PRICE £83
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362 700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

Usurps another great Gigabyte board – this one is a fantastic Via KT266A-based DDR solution. Integrated are both 10/100 LAN and four-channel audio from Creative, which is plenty good enough for gamers. In testing it proved stable and among the faster DDR266 boards for Athlon. A complete bargain if you're looking to build a cheap system around an AMD processor.

AMD PROCESSOR

**ATHLONXP 2600+**

STREET PRICE £269.07
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com/gb-uk

Running at 2.13Ghz the AthlonXP 2600+ is one of AMD's new family of thoroughbred CPUs. Built on a smaller manufacture process than the original AthlonXPs they promise to be quicker and cooler than their siblings and with reduced silicon comes one other benefit – reduced cost. While Intel's top chips costs almost £500, a seat at the bleeding edge of AMD's technology will cost around half that.

**ATHLONXP 2100+**

STREET PRICE £106.92
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com/gb-uk

Running at 1.8Ghz, the 2100+ AthlonXP is the quickest of AMD's original AthlonXP chips. Boasting both Quantispeed and 3DNow! Architectures plus fast cache and a 266MHz bus speed, most existing Athlon motherboards will support it out of the box. In terms of bang for your buck this provides the best middle-ground solution for gaming that money can buy.

**ATHLONXP 1800+**

STREET PRICE £65.80
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com/gb-uk

Low-end Pentium 4s and AthlonXPs are now getting so cheap they rival the Durons and Celerons of this world – and that's exactly what we have here. AMD has traditionally been the cheaper of the two processor giants, and the AthlonXP 1800+ (top-end equipment not so long ago), has taken such a plunge in price it's within £5 of the old Best Budget chip, the Duron 1.3Ghz. Bargain.

HARD DRIVE

**WD1200JB 120GB**

STREET PRICE £146.87
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.wdc.com

With your game and media collections growing every day – some game installs use over 2Gb of your precious storage – what you need is a really big, fast hard drive and that's exactly what Western Digital deliver with the WD1200JB. 8Mb of cache and spin speeds of 7200RPM mean that this 120Gb beast thrashes all competition beating a large proportion of SCSI drives too.

**BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB**

STREET PRICE £77.55
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

ATA IV is packed full of clever technology, which allows this 60Gb beastie to spin at the heady heights of 7200RPM while sounding much less obtrusive than many 5400RPM units. Don't underestimate the difference this can make. If you're still struggling with space, and un-installing games to make room for your newest purchases – this could well be worth a dip.

**U SERIES 6 40GB**

STREET PRICE £57.57
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, and find themselves replaced in the hallowed PC ZONE Buyer's Guide pages by its younger brother the Series 6. With the same specs as the Series 5 these new drives run even quieter and cooler than before, and provide what must be considered the minimum amount of storage space for any self-respecting gaming system.

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BEST PERFORMANCE		BEST BUY		BEST BUDGET		
	PX-W4012TA STREET PRICE £91.64 MANUFACTURER Plextor TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522 WEBSITE www.plexor.be A decent CD-rewriter provides a flexible storage solution, and most of the problems associated with this drive. If CD burning times of over five minutes won't do then look no further than the PX-W4012TA from Plexor. Cutting CDs in around two minutes this 40x leviathan has a full range of countermeasures including Burn-Proof to make coasters a thing of the past.		CRW3200E-VK STREET PRICE £86.94 MANUFACTURER Yamaha TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.yamaha-europe.com It might not be as fast as the Plexor drive but this is still a superb buy. Yamaha has consistently been praised for making great long-lasting CD-RW drives, and the 3200 is the companies' current range-topper. The overall bundle is excellent but we particularly love its Audiomaster burning mode for cutting high-quality audio CDs – and we're sure you will too. A veritable bargain if ever we saw one.		40X12X48 CDRW STREET PRICE £45.82 MANUFACTURER LiteOn TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.liteonit.com The LiteOn 40X12x48 offers stunning value for money, costing slightly more than many standard CD-ROM drives. While maybe not as feature-packed as the Plexor and Yamaha it does have a few tricks up its sleeve, including Smart-Burn – a technology which assesses media quality and adjusts burn speeds to reduce coaster ratio. The best low-cost drive that money can buy.	CD REWRITER
	3D PROPHET 9700 PRO STREET PRICE £349.99 MANUFACTURER Hercules TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881 WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com Although it arrived long before DirectX9, the Radeon 9700 GPU is already turning some heads and the Hercules board is among our favourites. Quick enough to run most games at high resolution with all the eye candy turned on, if you're looking for a new top-end card look no further. If you can afford to wait though, our recommendation would be to hold on until GeForce 5 hits in a couple of months.		VERTO TI4200 64MB STREET PRICE £124.54 MANUFACTURER PNY TELEPHONE 01256 338 609 WEBSITE www.pny-europe.com/uk The Verto Ti4200 64Mb GeForce4 from PNY is a relatively late arrival. Coming within 20 per cent of Ti4600 in many benchmarks, but costing up to half the price, it has all of the features of the quicker GPU without the associated dent in your wallet. Overall, we think this is the best solution if you're looking to future-proof your system without spending a ridiculous amount of cash along the way.		EXCALIBUR RADEON 9000 PRO STREET PRICE £83 MANUFACTURER HiTech TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.hitech.com.hk The Excalibur Radeon 9000 Pro may not be the fastest DirectX8.1 board but it's certainly the cheapest. Coming in at well under the price of the equivalent Hercules board, it sports ATI's new mainstream GPU and 64Mb of 275MHz DDR (500MHz). This HiTech board is a great step-up to playing shader-dominated games for the budget-conscious.	GRAPHICS CARD
	SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLATINUM/EX STREET PRICE £211.50 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.soundblaster.com Successor to the Sound Blaster Live! Series, the newer Sound Blaster Audigy brings with it a pile of new toys including EAX advanced HD and on-board Firewire. The Platinum/EX card sits at the top of the family with an external breakout box which moves all the important ports and connectors of the Platinum onto your desk.		SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLAYER STREET PRICE £79 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.soundblaster.com Demonstrating the same excellent audio quality of the Platinum/EX, the Sound Blaster Audigy Player is a card-only option perfect for Games/Audio and DVD. Lower CPU utilisation plus support for the new EAX standard means your games will sound as good as they look, and in a time when everyone seems to be focusing on graphics we say this is a big deal.		GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II DIGITAL EDITION STREET PRICE £45 MANUFACTURER Hercules TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881 WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com As a frequent offender on the PC ZONE Buyer's Guide, the Fortissimo II lived in the Best Bargain slot for many months – only to be replaced by its doppelgänger the Fortissimo II Digital Edition – which adds 5.1 for your DVDs and an even better software bundle.	SOUNDCARDS
	INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER V3.0 STREET PRICE £37.59 MANUFACTURER Microsoft TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk Probably the cheapest upgrade you can perform, but if you're playing with a rubbish mouse it could give you the biggest performance increases. Hardcore gamers love the IntelliMouse Explorer v3.0, and we have to agree that it's the best ball-less rodent out there. With improved optical sensors, a better shape and even more responsive buttons it's in a word – fragtastic.		MX500 STREET PRICE £35 MANUFACTURER Logitech TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127 WEBSITE www.logitech.com Microsoft might dominate the mouse market but it hasn't got everything its own way. The MX500 is one of the most interesting mice we've seen for a while now. The left and right buttons are hidden – being integrated into the upper shell of the body and on top of the fourth and fifth buttons. There are two either side of the wheel to assist scrolling, plus one that emulates Alt-Tab. Very handy.		OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE STREET PRICE £25.84 MANUFACTURER Microsoft TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk For gamers who don't need five buttons and a portable back-scratcher on their mice, we present the Optical Mouse Blue. With all of the high-tech optical wizardry of the other Microsoft mice, this funky blue three-buttoned offering is extremely comfortable to use and is perfect for RPG/RTS titles – or FPS-ers who prefer to keep most of their controls on the keyboard.	MICE
	PRO KEYBOARD STREET PRICE £52.87 MANUFACTURER Apple TELEPHONE 0800 039 1010 WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk While it may seem odd to have a Mac product amongst all this PC goodness we have good reason. Rather than faff around with 15 multifunction buttons which don't help at all in fast-paced gaming, the Pro Keyboard from Apple is simply the best USB offering out there. Quality components make it one of the most quiet and compact offerings money can buy. You get what you pay for, remember.		OFFICE KEYBOARD STREET PRICE £28.19 MANUFACTURER Microsoft TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk Microsoft's office keyboard may seem more focused at the professional market with the MSOffice buttons across the top, but we found the scroll wheel and remappable keys brilliant in many games – in some situations acting like an additional mouse wheel, one for weapons, the other for items. Handy shortcuts abound and brilliant all-round performance make this our new Best Buy.		MULTIMEDIA KEYBOARD STREET PRICE £21.14 MANUFACTURER Microsoft TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk The Multimedia Keyboard can only be described as the geek's friend. With support for many of the Windows XP customisations plus dedicated buttons for the instant messenger app of your choice and a central console of buttons to drive media player, life doesn't get much simpler, and, at under £25, not much cheaper either. If you're struggling with a poor keyboard give the pub a miss for one night and get this.	KEYBOARDS
	WINGMAN CORDLESS STREET PRICE £34.07 MANUFACTURER Logitech TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127 WEBSITE www.logitech.com The PC might not have a definitive gamepad just yet, but this is as close as it gets for the moment. The infrared interface doesn't hinder your input. On the contrary, the fact it's wireless means your desktop is less cluttered and the discreet receiver is almost invisible. Comfortable to use and a doddle to set up, it makes the grade as best performance but only by a short distance.		FIRESTORM DUAL-POWER GAMEPAD STREET PRICE £24.99 MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881 WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk This wired, force-feedback version of the Firestorm wireless might not win any awards for looks, but its ergonomics are great. Decent soft grips with superbly placed buttons and a decent d-pad make precision control a breeze. Set-up couldn't be simpler and the rumble ain't bad either. A no-nonsense pad for no-nonsense gamers.		SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY STREET PRICE £12.92 MANUFACTURER Microsoft TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad, USB. Dead simple, dead effective and at under £13 really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear. We've used them in the office for years and we've never heard a word against them.	JOYPAD

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JOYSTICK

**HOTAS COUGAR**

STREET PRICE £249

MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster

TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881

WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

Have we finally snapped? £249 for a joystick?

You could get a brand new GeForce 4 for that and still have enough change to go out on the razz for a couple of weeks. Ah, but the HOTAS is probably the finest flight stick in the world, complete with tome-like manual. For those that have everything this is the closest you'll get to sitting in a plane... If you're strong enough to lift it out of the box.

**SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK 2**

STREET PRICE £52.87

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100

WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

The Sidewinder Force Feedback 2 is a fine stick with perhaps the best, most refined force-feedback settings around. Performance is great overall, with the infra-red activation sensors in the handle. Its huge base will keep it planted on your desk and as long as you don't mind the extra wiring for the external power supply, it makes a great enhancement for any airborne frolics.

**CYBORG 3D GOLD**

STREET PRICE £30

MANUFACTURER Saitek

TELEPHONE 01454 451 900

WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk

Saitek's current generation of sticks are

fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line, former Best Buy, USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both durable and adjustable – even the left-handed are catered for with response and accuracy both unequalled. If you're not interested in force-feedback effects (and to be honest who is these days?) this is the stick to go for.

SPEAKERS

**MEGAWORKS 510D**

STREET PRICE £299.62

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.uk.europe.creative.com

The Megaworks 510D is the Daddy of gaming speakers – five 70W satellites and one 150W digitally amplified subwoofer together deliver 500W of power to recreate subtle sounds and devastating explosions alike. Want to know how those soldiers on Omaha Beach in *Medal Of Honour* really felt? Now's your chance. Just make sure your neighbours are away first.

**PROMEDIA 4.1**

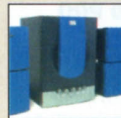
STREET PRICE £299

MANUFACTURER Klipsch

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.klipsch.com

Klipsch's Promedia 4.1 took Best Buy many months ago with their TXH-Approval and great sound reproduction. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers to split your ears as well as the Crossfires from VideoLogic did. Whether you're a gamer or an audiophile looking for your PC to make sweet music, these are the business, as long as you can find an outlet willing to serve them up.

**XPS210**

STREET PRICE £40

MANUFACTURER Hercules

TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881

WEBSITE www.hercules.com

Who needs surround sound? Answer:

everyone who can afford it. For everyone else, this small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set-up is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue it looks the part too...

HEADPHONES

**HD600**

STREET PRICE £200

MANUFACTURER Sennheiser

TELEPHONE 01494 551 551

WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk

The HD600 are Audiophile-level headphones, and unless used with a soundcard like the Audigy Platinum/EX are total overkill for most gamers. That doesn't stop their fantastic response range from reproducing every gunshot and explosion perfectly with bass so deep and strong you'll be convinced your speakers are running too. They won't obviously – you'll have sold them to finance these.

**HD497**

STREET PRICE £47

MANUFACTURER Sennheiser

TELEPHONE 01494 551 551

WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk

Replacing the HD200 Masters – which used to occupy our Best Buy slot comes the HD497 – also from Sennheiser. These new headphones have an enhanced frequency response range which might not come close to the HD600, but is still pretty damn good. Their extremely comfortable design coupled with easily replaceable parts, mean these headphones could well outlast your PC.

**GAMEVOICE USB**

STREET PRICE £34.07

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100

WEBSITE www.microsoft.com

When are headphones more than just

headphones? Simple – when they're the Microsoft Gamevoice USB. The Gamevoice allows you to talk to your mates online as you play clan games with a handy control panel which lets you switch between comms channels. Adding a new dimension to your gaming online, and doubling as a decent set of headphones they're a bit of a bargain.

TFT

**180MT**

STREET PRICE £1,100

MANUFACTURER Philips

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.philips.co.uk

The 180MT from Philips is more than just a flat panel. An 18-inch fourth-generation screen with VGA connectivity plus inputs for Scart, S-Video and an RF tuner mean that you can ditch you telly and pipe all manner of consoles, TV and video kit through the one screen. You can even use picture-in-picture to watch the latest Futurama while you die repeatedly in BF1942. Classic.

**4332**

STREET PRICE £640.37

MANUFACTURER Iiyama

TELEPHONE 01438 745 482

WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Winner of our 17-inch flat panel group test, the 4332 from Iiyama is packed with liquid crystal goodness. With the best contrast and colours we've seen from any flatscreen coupled with excellent pixel response times, this is one of the first screens which make the idea of a gaming TFT a reality. The boss, Dave Woods, has actually got this on his desk and he loves it. The git.

**T1620B**

STREET PRICE £522.87

MANUFACTURER Sharp

TELEPHONE 0800 262 958

WEBSITE www.sharp.co.uk

Sharp's 16-inch T1620B is over £100

cheaper than the Iiyama and delivers all the visual goodies albeit on a smaller display area. Delivering 1280 x 1024 on a digital 75Hz, this screen will make your games look great while allowing you to reclaim some desktop real estate from large lumbering CRTs. If TFTs aren't quite affordable yet, this proves that the day isn't far away.

MONITOR

**GDM-FW900**

STREET PRICE £1,139

MANUFACTURER Sony

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.sony.co.uk

Do you remember the day when PCs used to ship with 14-inch screens? Pah. The gigantic 24-inch GDM-FW900 from Sony has to be seen to be believed. Costing almost double that of the Iiyama Vision Master Pro 512, you'd expect something special and that's exactly what you get. Supporting nutty resolutions such as 2304 x 1440 at 80Hz, you can be sure this ultra-flat screen will deliver a rock-solid picture at all times.

**VISION MASTER PRO 512**

STREET PRICE £585.15

MANUFACTURER Iiyama

TELEPHONE 01438 745 482

WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron screen, it has a rather smaller viewable area than suggested – 20 inches instead of 22, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048 x 1536 at 85Hz – something many graphics cards can't even support. There's also a four-port USB hub and integrated speakers which are OK for Windows use, but may be slightly tinny for games or music.

**720P 17-INCH CRT**

STREET PRICE £118.67

MANUFACTURER Hansol

TELEPHONE 01252 360 400

WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer Hansol is a

company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it does 1280 x 1024 at an excellent 85Hz (and for those mad enough, 1600 x 1200 at 75Hz). Focus is tight and the picture sharp, and considering you're paying a little over £100 there's not a lot that will touch this for the money. If you've still got a 15-inch monitor, consider yourself rebuked.

MP3 PLAYER

**APPLE IPOD**

STREET PRICE £399 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Apple

TELEPHONE 020 8210 1000

WEBSITE www.apple.com/ipod

With all of the styling of your desktop

systems, the iPod caused a few dropped jaws for looks alone. Packing a 20Gb hard disk and speedy Firewire interface, the new models are finally Windows-compatible and come with excellent headphones and a tiny little inline remote control that means you don't have to keep fishing it out of your pocket to change tracks or up the volume.

**ARCHOS JUKEBOX MULTIMEDIA**

STREET PRICE £330 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Archos

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.archos.com

While it may never win any awards for aesthetics, the Jukebox Multimedia from Archos is the Swiss Army knife of media players. Handling one of the widest selections of file types the player can even play back a selection of video formats including DIVX. Sound is fantastic but as with a lot of other players on the market, the bundled headphones are shite.

**M-ANY ULTRASM**

STREET PRICE £179.95 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER M-Any

TELEPHONE 0115 963 0222

WEBSITE www.mp3players.co.uk

As one of the smallest solid state MP3

players in the world, we reckon the Ultrasm from M-Any is also one of the best. Available in both 128Mb and 256Mb configurations, this tiny little device is about the size of six credit cards, and comes bristling with accessories and not-too-naïf headphones. You're not going to fit your entire collection on it, but at least it will fit in your pocket.

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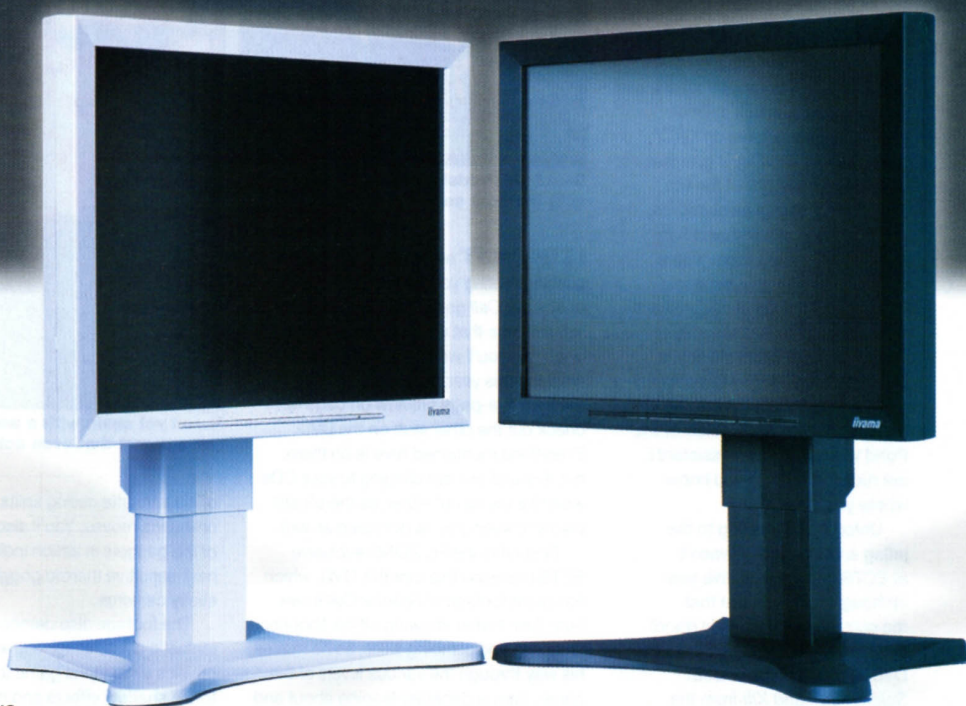
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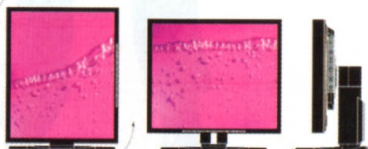
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EXTENDED PLAY

Finishing a game is only the beginning in Extended Play. Maps, mods, add-ons and extras are all here to help you get the most out of what you play

HOTEL TYCOON



■ FRENCH MAID Rhianna Pratchett

▲ America is a strange place. They do things differently there. I feel I'm qualified to comment after I went there for a week to bring you the latest updates on *C&C: Generals* and *SimCity 4* (see last issue). The highlight of the trip, aside from the games of course, was travelling in a Humvee limo and finding a hotel room where literally everything was for sale, including all the floral decorations and the soap! In fact the only thing that wasn't for sale was a pot of pencils, which I felt obliged to nick on principle. Still it was nice to get back to this side of the Pond where the shop assistants are rude, sullen and you know where you stand.

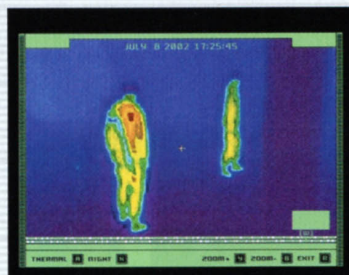
Unfortunately owing to the jetlag and workload I wasn't at ECTS for very long this year (although I can confirm that the pizza was particularly good). We've included some exclusive DVD movie footage of both *Splinter Cell* and *XIII* from the show, which you can read about on these very pages.

Jake Simpson is focusing on specific jobs in the games industry in this month's Guide, and you might also recognise a familiar name in there, ex-PC ZONE freelancer Les Ellis, once a feared shadowy figure in games journalism and now a producer at Pocket Studios. He is, incidentally, the one to thank for bequeathing me 'Dead Ted', the mutilated voodoo teddy bear that sits on top of my monitor at work. A girl needs protection you know.

The Fisher king



SSnake is history, Sam's the man
■ www.splintercell.com



Give Sam Predator-style thermal vision with the heat sensitive goggles.

IT'S NOT even out yet and we're already treating you lot to a big spoonful of *Splinter Cell* goodness. It's the stealth action game that we predict will be the one thing you'll want in your Christmas stocking this year. In addition to our massive five-page preview on page 42, check out the other stuff on the DVD. Everything mentioned here is on there, but those of you still clinging to your CDs won't be losing out either, as there's still plenty to keep you lot occupied as well.

First off is the PC ZONE-exclusive ECTS movie on this month's DVD, which has great footage of *Splinter Cell*'s new hero Sam Fisher showing off his shooting, sneaking and climbing skills, as he makes his way through the various levels of the game. Sam is generally leaping about and looking unfairly cool, while executing a few

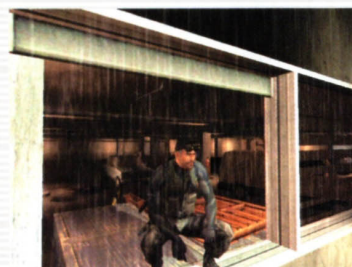


Faced yet again with a wall of searing heat and flames, Sam Fisher realises with some regret that even action heroes leave the grill on sometimes.

of his favourite ceiling splits and dropping-on-heads moves. You'll also see a few of the gadgets in action including the heat-sensitive thermo goggles and the sticky cameras.

The footage also demonstrates the fantastic dynamic lighting and soft body physics used in the game to create true-to-life shadow effects and make materials like cloth and plastic move in a realistic

way. There's also similar stuff in our *Splinter Cell* in-game footage on the CD, where you'll also find a screensaver and Winamp skin. And if that isn't enough DVD-ers can also find all of the above, plus the latest *Splinter Cell* screenshots and wallpaper.



The driving rain, the blackness, the tight suits... what's this life business all about then?



Travelling by foot is so passé, hanging from the ceiling is most definitely the way to go.

CHEATS AHOY!



The old Cheat Master section of these pages may be dead, but we haven't buried it completely. Check out our cover discs where the art of cheating is still very much alive and kicking. You can find all the latest cheats for your favourite games under CheatStation in the Extended Play section of the discs.

This month we've got everything you need to know to cheat your way through *Empire Earth*, *Beach Life*, *Disciples II*, *Dark Prophecy*, *Delta Force: Task Force Dagger*, *Half Life: Opposing Force*, *Echelon* and *Startopia*. And in case you're in any doubt, just remember: those who can, do... those who can't, cheat. It's the only way.





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THE GUIDE
Get ahead in the games industry



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Parkas at the ready...



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DISC PAGES
Check out the latest demos



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FIGHT CLUB
Come and 'ave a go...

Unrail command

Forget the pathetic lightning gun, it's time for some real action

■ <http://www.unreal-command.com/>

LONG BEFORE *UT2003* was so much as unveiled, modders have been looking at UnrealScript and how the game would work. The community has already begun modelling weapons and characters in earnest, and one of the first of the *UT2003* mods to be initiated is *Unreal Command*, which combines FPS and RTS to produce full-scale online war in the *UT2003* interface.

Featuring no less than 7,200 character variations, the mod lets you choose between the commander and soldier class. As a soldier, it'll be your job to get in on the action and start ploughing through the opposing force using the array of weapons provided including a rail gun, which is a first for *Unreal Tournament*. The commander, while not part of the ground squad, sits in front of a

monitor and commands their troops with full view of the battlefield below.

As well as wandering around with ludicrously big guns strapped to your shoulder, you will also have the added bonus of armoured air and ground units that will be controlled by the commander. If there's not a tank behind you or an aircraft in the vicinity, you know you're in the suicide squad that's being sent to lure the enemy from their hiding place.

It certainly sounds like a promising take on the *UT* formula, so watch this space for the first release of the mod later in the year.



Now that is a big gun.

Age Of Wonders II

■ <http://aow2.godgames.com>

ON THE DVD **TURN-BASED** strategy games might not be every RTS fan's cup of cha, but their stoic supporters have been inundated with a bevy of sequels this year. Not least of which was *Age Of Wonders II*, which improved on every aspect of the original game and gave us quality turn-based action in a beautifully detailed world based around the seven spheres of magic.

This month we're bringing you the latest European update (v1.1), which contains a load of gameplay and balance tweaks as well as the eight-player custom scenario *Let Sleeping Gods Lie*. We've also got two more official scenarios: *Death Swamp* and the *Marching Desert*, two music samples and a wallpaper pack. Enough to keep you going for a while anyway.



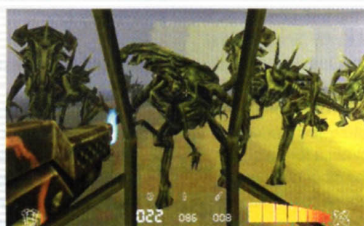
9/10 turn-based gamers prefer PC ZONE.

Aliens Vs Predator II

■ www.planetavp.com/blackwraith

ON THE DVD **EVEN THOUGH** we're still waiting for some *AvP2: Primal Hunt* offerings from the guys at planetavp, the original *AvP2* mapping community has been hard at work creating premature heart-attack inducing levels. First we have Facehugger's Night Storm map pack, containing four maps: *Storm Complex*, *Storm Compound*, *Storm Base* and *Storm Drain*. Secondly we're bringing you a selection of maps from the Black Wraiths at Planetavp. If you want to see more of these guys' work, then click on the above links.

As always, don't forget to check our Essential Patches section on this month's cover disc for the latest *Aliens Vs Predator 2* patch and all the latest and greatest updates for your favourite games.



Say hello to Mr Flamethrower.

NEVERWINTER COMPETITION

In our Guide in issue 119 we showed you how to get to grips with the basics of creating levels in *Neverwinter Nights* using the in-game editor. Now it's your turn to put your skills to the test in our level editing competition. Create a level using the in-game toolkit; add your own lighting, sound effects, and monsters, hell even a plotline. Basically anything you like, to make it as enjoyable a playing experience as possible.

Our illustrious panel of judges at PC ZONE and Neverwinter Vaults will then judge your entries, and the winner will get a brand spanking new Geforce 5 card, and five runners-up will win a game of their choice. What are you waiting for?

■ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number and email address (and age if under 18). Send your entries to us at: PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD on a floppy disc, or email it (if it's small enough) to letters@pczone.co.uk with 'Neverwinter Nights Competition' in the subject line. Closing date: November 15, 2002.

Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

WIN A GEFORCE 5 GRAPHICS CARD!

SHORTS

UNLUCKY FOR SOME



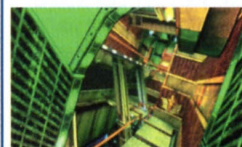
ON THE DVD One of the most unusual offerings at ECTS was Ubi Soft's *XIII*, a cel-shaded FPS/stealth action game in a similar style to *Jet Set Radio* and based on the comic of the same name. Our DVD footage and screenshot pack follows the experiences and flashbacks of the lead character, who washes up on a beach with a serious case of amnesia and a mysterious XIII tattoo.

LET BATTLE COMMENCE



ON THE DVD They say that anyone who wants to go to war has never been there before. But what do you care, you can go to war right on your computer screens with *Battlefield 1942* and *America's Army*. This month we've got the v1.1 multiplayer and demo patches, plus a wallpaper pack for *Battlefield* and the latest two patches for *America's Army*.

DREDD AND LOVING IT



ON THE DVD Continuing our coverage of Rebellion's *Judge Dredd Vs Judge Death*, PC ZONE are bringing your exclusive DVD footage of the game running in all its glory this month. And if after you've basked in the delights of that you still feel like you need more of a Dredd fix, you'll also find a pack of all the latest 2000AD wallpapers.

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED



ON THE DVD Accompanying this month's helicopter-riding *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* demo, there's also a screensaver and a screenshot pack for our DVD readers. Next month we should also have the single-player demo on the CDs together with a wallpaper pack so watch this space...



THE GUIDE: HOW TO GET AHEAD IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY

PART TWO

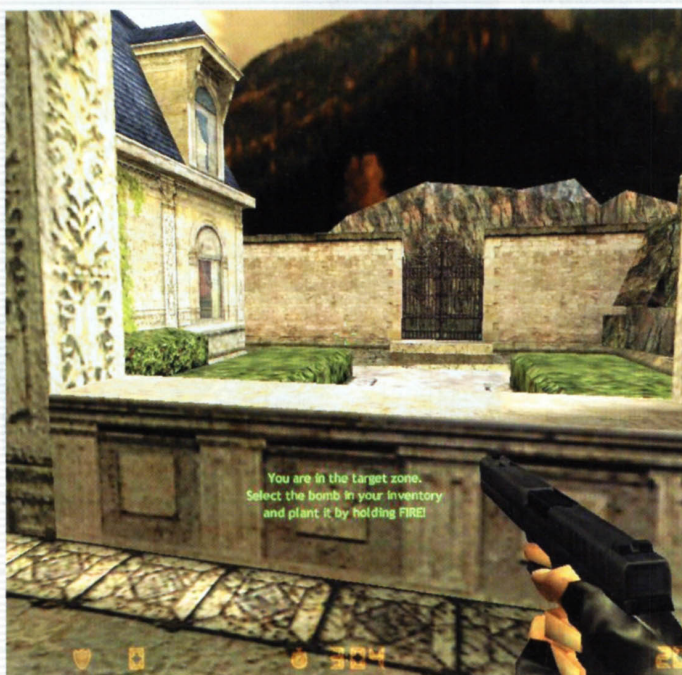
Jake Simpson, programmer at Maxis, completes his trek through the game building process. Last month we looked at how a game goes through its production cycle; now you can see who does what and when, before deciding which job would suit you

YOU PLAY games all day but you don't get paid for doing it. Does that sum up your existence at the moment? If so why not dedicate yourself to a life of privilege, fast cars, loose women and all the games that you can stomach. You might think that getting a job in the games industry is an impossible dream but all you need is dedication, enthusiasm and the right information. Which is where we come in. Over the next few pages we're going to show you who does what, what skills you need for the job and how to get your foot in the door.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS: THE GAME DESIGNER

Everyone wants to be a games designer – all you do is just sit around playing games, coming up with abstract ideas and telling other people to do it, right? Wrong, it's actually loads of hard work. You might play around with a few games, but you're going to spend most of your time doing paperwork and hosting discussions to get your vision across to others. To do this you'll have played the game you want to make in your head, and you'll need to be able to communicate this to a team well enough for them to turn your dream into a boxed reality.

The tools of your trade are a style bible, which might contain references to movies, and include pictures and hand-drawn



Do you want to be a mimic and create the next *Counter-Strike* clone, or pursue innovative game design like *Civilization* did?



art to show the look you're after; and a game flow document that details the story the game is trying to tell, what the skills are, how they're learned and so on. You'll also need a basic asset list. This should contain descriptions of all the content that needs to be created.

But being a designer is much more than just having great gaming ideas. They need to be new ideas – too many designers think that taking someone else's

THE GAME DESIGNER: WILL WRIGHT

THE MAN THAT'S RESPONSIBLE FOR *THE SIMS*, THE GAME THAT'S BEEN IN THE CHARTS LONGER THAN APPLES HAVE BEEN GREEN

What's your typical day like?

I get to work around 10am, dig through my email and find out what the most pressing issues of the day are. I'll then probably talk to a press person on the phone for about half an hour before lunch and then lots of meetings. Play with prototypes for future games for a while, then talk to someone on the phone who wants us to program 'SimWhatever' for them (usually takes about half hour to talk them out of it). Do some research on the web about whatever takes my fancy that day. Play *The Sims Online* for a while, see how it's handling. Then maybe talk to an engineer about why my favourite feature isn't working properly. Review a few design docs from the other designers and return phone calls. I leave work around 6:30pm.

What are the best and worst parts of your job?

The best? The research phase, early game prototyping, working with motivated, creative people and visiting fansites. The worst? Surviving crunch-time on a game and dealing with boring meetings.

Where does your inspiration come from?

Most of my inspiration generally comes from reading. I read quite a bit of non-fiction: science, sociology, economics, biology...

How could we get a job like yours then?

The best way into design is through one of the main development branches (production, art or programming). Each company is different but I think it's usually a matter of



getting onto a team and then finding a way to give good input to the design side of the team. Real design talent seems to be rather rare and if you have good instincts for your talents will be recognised.



If only developers were as enthusiastic as this all the time.

THE LEAD PROGRAMMER: JAMES MONROE

HE WORKS AT RAVEN ON PROJECTS LIKE *JEDI KNIGHT II*. LIFE DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER, DOES IT?

Can you talk us through your average day?

This changes throughout the course of a project but in the beginning, a typical day consists of technology and game design meetings and even more meetings about specific gameplay decisions. During the middle of the project, I try and actually get to code myself, but I'll get constantly interrupted by people who want to talk about programming, level design or scripting. Then comes the dreaded Crunch Mode™, when everything gets a bit gruelling and I spend most of the day fixing bugs. I'll usually stay later than everyone else so that I can send the latest build to our producer. After the game has gone gold, I usually stay on the project for a

while longer providing support on the message boards and through email.

What's the best and worst thing about the job?

The best thing is that I get to program exciting new stuff. And better yet, when it's done, I can play it and release it to the public. This makes up for all the long hours of production, which, of course, are the worst part.

Any advice for wannabes?

Just do it. If you don't have the skill, go to college, or read tutorials, or find some friends and make a group project. You need to learn time management skills and discipline. Completing college is one way to do that as it shows that you have the



dedication to complete your tasks. Not everyone who has this job has a college degree, but what we all have in common is dedication and enthusiasm for our projects.

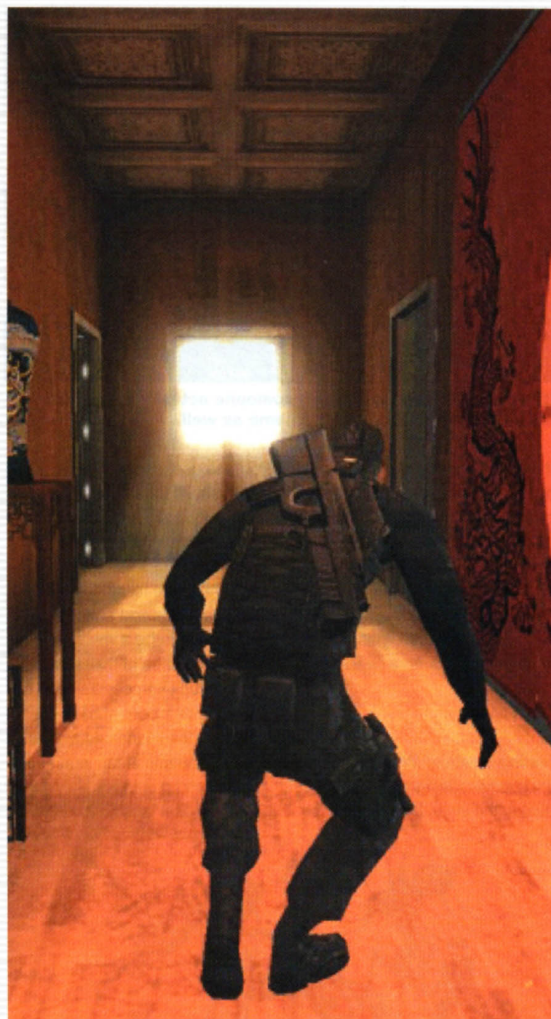
idea and adding new weapons to it is creative designing. True creativity is doing something that's never been seen before. Reproducing *Counter-Strike* is just mimicry – creating *Civilization* is real game design. It's also the ability to think on your feet, to be able to take a new idea that just doesn't work and massaging it into something that's fun to play. Now that's a real skill.

One of the most asked questions is: where does the inspiration come from? A good designer can draw it from anywhere. There was a game

works (although it does feel a bit like that sometimes). Game coding is all about knowing when to take lessons you were taught at college and throwing them out the window. If you're a good programmer you'll know when to do stuff the 'correct' way, and when it's time for some mean hackery to get something to work immediately.

If this is the job you want it's worth pointing out that game coders are now starting to get specialised. You've got your

graphics gurus who are coming up with new ways to draw shadows, your AI programmers who know all about 'A-star path finding algorithms' (*Beg pardon? – Ed*), sound people, networking programmers, tool builders, gameplay guys, and so on and so forth. You get the picture. Programmers are usually the first on the project, and the last to leave. When all the art and sound assets are finished, the programmers are the ones still working 16-hour days, fixing



Programmers get to mess around with all kinds of great effects, like the dynamic lighting in *Splinter Cell*.



This is where the magic bit occurs. Because the whiteboard is the one thing every developer needs.

from Jeff Minter (www.LlamaSoft.co.uk) years ago on the Commodore 64 called *Hovver Bovver*, which involved mowing a lawn. And it was fun. Game ideas can (and should) come from anywhere, so your imagination is the limit.

REVENGE OF THE NERDS: THE PROGRAMMERS

Ah, the engine room. But you're not going to be sat in a room stuffing random numbers into memory and hoping something



Even if they're not to everyone's taste, every individual item in *The Sims* is lovingly crafted by somebody.



It's easy to forget that there's someone actually responsible for making the outside of the game as well.

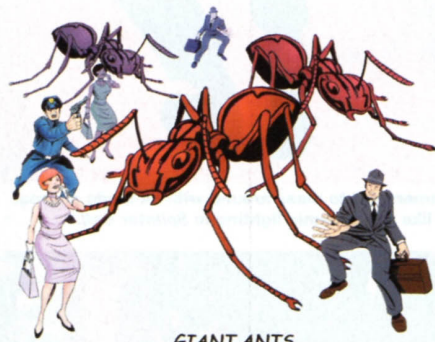
the last few bugs. It's not easy, but you get to create the magic on the screen.

Another important point is that professional education in this field is a must. Getting a degree is definitely worth all the years of drinking, womanising and waking up with a headache.

CAN YOU GUESS WHAT IT IS? THE ARTISTS

Feeling creative? Want to build the models, design the graphics, design the style, figure out what

fonts to use, and do all the artistic stuff for a game? This is your job then and you can choose from a hit-list of three positions. Texture artists do all the 2D art, like fonts, textures, HUD graphics and so on. You'll need to be a whiz with Photoshop and at the least be able to stick someone's head on the body of a porn star. Then there are the modellers who are the only people in the world who understand packages like Maya, 3Dstudio Max and SoftImage.



GIANT ANTS

Concept art is one of the ways artists help envisage what their characters, units and buildings will look like in the game.

THE PRODUCER: LES ELLIS

HE USED TO WORK ON OUR SISTER MAG CVG, BUT HE'S NOW A PRODUCER. HOW DID YOU DO IT, LES?

Les Ellis, of Pocket Studios (and ex-PC ZONE freelancer) is currently hard at work on GBA titles *Lord Of The Rings* and *Gauntlet*.

So what do you actually do all day, Les?

It's never dull, usually long and rarely the same two days running. Mornings are usually spent catching up on overnight email from the US, feeding any information from that back to the teams, before moving on to meetings, tweaking game designs and levels, deathmatching, prodding people for stuff on their schedules, more deathmatching, surfing the web and annoying people with loud music.

What is the best and worst part of your job?

The worst part is obvious – you would not believe the hours that get done towards the end of the development cycle. And dealing with publishers, oh what a joy! The best stuff? The games. Playing 'em, making 'em, seeing your ideas up there on the screen. And games developers' offices tend to be a fun place to work. The kind of stuff that goes on in here is unbelievable at times.

How does someone get into this area of game production?

Most producers seem to come from a testing background but I was a games journalist for 13

THE LEVEL DESIGNER: CLIFF BELINSKI

UNREAL AND UNREAL TOURNAMENT, TWO OF OUR FAVOURITE GAMES. HOW DO YOU DO IT CLIFFY?

What's your typical day like?

We have an open-ended schedule around here. However, we strongly encourage people to overlap in the afternoon. Our busiest times are around 3pm and 11pm. Balancing the shifts between 'married with kids' types and 'single and on a crazy schedule' is often a tricky thing.

What would you say was the best thing about level design? And the worst?

The best thing about level design is seeing everything come together in an environment that

you designed. The worst has to be making sure that the environment runs well and plays well with AI. Tweaking levels for AI is a tricky thing.

Any advice for newbies?

Get hands-on experience in programs like UnrealEd, Maya, and Max. Make beautiful work and promote the hell out of it on the Internet.

You can get more advice on how to get into the games industry from Cliff on his website www.cliffyb.com.



Modellers take the textures from the 2D artists to texture the model, which is then handed to the animators, who do their magic. There are two schools of animation – the people who build their animations themselves from the ground up, and those that use motion capture. Motion capture tends to give more fluid human movement but has the drawback of costing shedloads. Plus of course, it's hard to get good motion capture for space aliens with 17 legs. Usually in the case of bipeds, animators tend to go with a mixture of the two.

In terms of qualifications you're going to need an art background – most artists come from art college and you'll need to have experience in the relevant software packages.

CONTENT CREATORS/LEVEL DESIGNERS

These are the people who are responsible for creating

everything that doesn't come from the artists, modellers and animators. Levels for *Quake* don't just appear; someone sitting down with a knowledge of architecture, a copy of QERadiant and a penchant for loud music creates them. On *The Sims* projects they have what they call Object Engineers. These are people who gather assets created by others (animators, modellers, texture artists and sound engineers) and actually put them in the game. They use an in-game scripting system to plop these assets down and script them. They're actually responsible for all the gameplay you see, since the game is effectively the scripting system.

Lots of game development teams are starting to move toward this model, of having a team that simply plugs stuff in to existing systems and engines that the programmers create. Content implementers are a curious group, requiring some coding knowledge, art skills, lots of gameplay feel and great communication skills, since they talk to just about everyone else in the team. It's also a great place to start out on a development team. It may be grunt work (lots of it) but it's a good way to learn the systems a game/company uses repeatedly and to show your gaming ideas.

WHERE THE BUCK STOPS: PRODUCERS

Producers produce. Sounds obvious right? It's not always clear exactly what a producer does, but effectively you're the ultimate authority over the game, as well as the person taking responsibility for the final product.

You're not a game designer, a programmer, a marketing guru, or a writer. You're an organiser, with fingers in everything. A good

producer knows his strengths and those of his team and delegation is the key. You should only need to step in to guide direction according to a publisher's need, or to fix a problem that's erupted. The best description of a producer is the responsible grown-up in a classroom full of slightly autistic kids who want to make a game.

You'll often get the short end of the stick when it comes to games, as you're the person who's blamed when things go wrong. When things go right, it's obviously the programmers or the animator's success, rather than that of the organiser, but producers have lost their jobs over a bad game, while the development team just goes on to their next disaster.

So why would anyone want the job? Mainly because when it goes right it can lead to big things. Producers are the ones that become executives and end up with a billion stock options and retiring at the age of 40.

So there you go. A look at how a game is made, who does what, and why. Maybe there's a place in there that appeals to you? If so, go for it. Someone has to make the games of tomorrow right? [E]

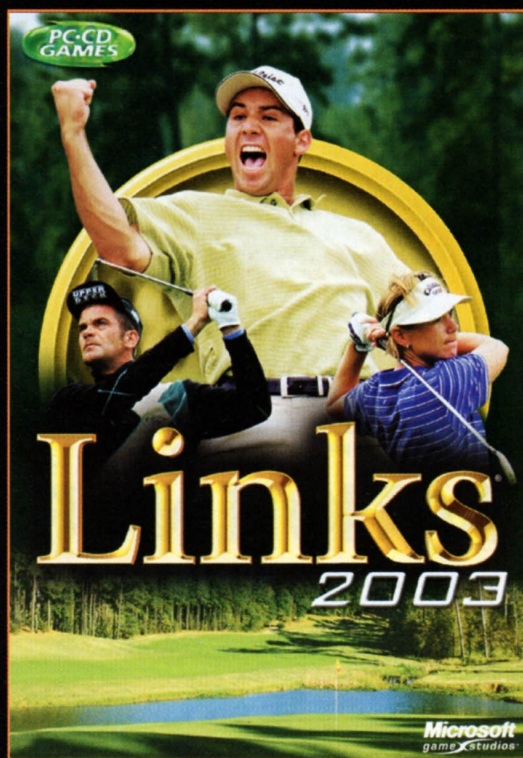


Keep this in the office if you've got the room. Always handy if a game goes wrong.

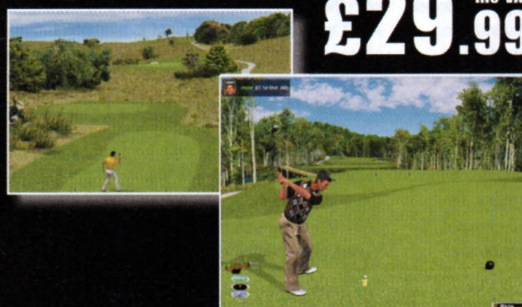
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THE MODSQUAD

More modding loveliness with **Tony Lamb**



Nali will now help you take on the opposition in firefights.



ONP maps are stunning and often on an epic scale.

OPERATION NA PALI 1.30

SINGLE PLAYER

ON THE DVD **SIZE** 163Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of *Unreal Tournament*, patched to version 436
www.planetunreal.com/teamvortex

WITHOUT question, *Operation Na Pali* is a classic. Working alongside partner mod *Oldskool*, which allows *Unreal* levels and weapons to be played in *UT*, *ONP* is visually stunning, well constructed, challenging and damned huge to boot. Single-player mods are something of a rarity and many that do appear let themselves slip into becoming a succession of puzzles and little more, so those that offer a truly rewarding and rounded experience are

quite rare. *Operation Na Pali* is that rarity, ranking as one of the best mods around – for any game – and proves that even with the 2003 version snapping at *UT*'s heels there's still plenty of life in the old girl yet.

The storyline harks back to the original *Unreal*, when the objective was to escape from the Skaarj on the planet Na Pali. In *ONP* your task is to go back there after receiving a distress call from the wreckage of the Vortex Rikers spaceship (the

crash landing of which stranded you in the first place). You find the Skaarj still subjugating the peaceful Nali race, but now the Nali will help you, and the challenge to find out what happened to the other survivors begins.

Progressing through the game, you'll enjoy a variety of combat encounters, story-telling cut-scenes, helpful hints from the universal translator you carry with you (which interrupts with information when you're near



Brief flight-sim sections are an inspired distraction.

key items) and even some flight sim challenges, which make for an enjoyable interlude in the game. All reflect the impressive amount of time and effort that has gone into *ONP* with some fantastic map environments and always something new to see, interact with and shoot. Add in the tutorial level, co-operative mode, cool music and all-round

wow-factor of this mod and you'll see that this is a very professional package indeed, which any fan of *Unreal* or *UT* should relish. A must-have mod if ever there was one.

PCZONE VERDICT
Essential

90

RENEGADE LEGION 1.5

ON THE DVD **SIZE** 86Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear* – *Urban Operations* patched to version 252
www.planetrainbowsix.com/gravedigga/index

GET together some of the biggest and best-known names in *Rainbow Six* modding circles, give them a good idea to work with and stand back and watch the fireworks. That must have been what happened when this bunch sat down to create the classiest mod yet for Tom Clancy's favourite shooter. Set circa 6691, the Renegade Legion are freedom fighters, rebelling against the all-powerful Terran Overlord Government (TOG) whose caste-based Romanesque culture is taking over the universe. As a team

leader in the Legion, you have to lead your warriors into a succession of commando-style raids on TOG territory and installations. Risky...

This couldn't be much further away from the original *Rogue Spear* concept, and very little of the old game remains, although the original characters are still there – not that you'll recognise them inside their new combat gear. Many of these weapons and skins are from the Cocobolo stable, which brought us the *SWAT* and *Red Diamond Group* mods we've

already featured, so quality is guaranteed. And with the mapping and gameplay skills of the rest of the team (HellKnight, AlphaEcho, Shadow, Gravedigga, Bear, Serellan and others) it all adds up to an impressive mod.

With its new interface, maps, weaponry, skins and tough missions, *RLTC* is a must for any *Rainbow Six* enthusiast.

PCZONE VERDICT
Fraggers delight

86

TOTAL CONVERSION



You might look cool but you're really just cannon-fodder.



Weapons are definitely more powerful, just ask Mr No-head here.

REAL(TM)ISTIC 5

ON THE DVD SIZE 2.2Mb REQUIRES Full version of *Soldier Of Fortune II: Double Helix*
www.sof2match.com

SINGLE PLAYER

THERE IS a widely held view that Activision's *Soldier Of Fortune* series is quite violent enough already, and that the levels of gore seen in the latest installment are even more over the top. Which makes the

creation of a 'realism' mod a bit of a surprise, and yet here it is in all its glory, with a range of small changes that do a lot to enhance the game. The updates required are relatively small, being mainly limited to weapon tweaks and

the provision of a new health/ weapons load-out display. But anyone who's sick of riddling an opponent with shots only to see him struggle to his feet a minute later and start firing again will welcome the fact that bullets

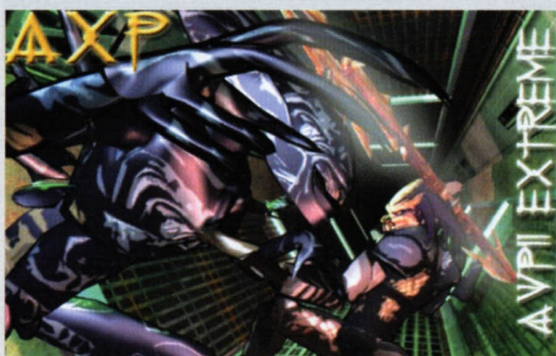


New reticules and health/armour HUD in REAL(tm)istic 5.

now have the sort of impact that they do in real life. Enemies wearing body armour are tougher of course, but the sniper rifle is now a seriously effective weapon. Of course, this means you're more vulnerable too, so you'll

need to be doubly careful not to get hit, but surely that's the idea?

PCZONE VERDICT **61**
Blood splattered



AxP makes *Aliens Vs Predator 2* even more blood-curdling.

AXP-3 1.2

ON THE DVD SIZE 29Mb REQUIRES Full version of *Aliens Vs Predator 2*, patched to version 0.96
www.planetavp.com/lvmods/avp2/axp3

AVP2 IS probably the single scariest game ever... you need to turn the lights off to see the screen and then you wish to God you'd left them on when an alien leaps from the darkness and chops you to ribbons. It's not for the faint-hearted. It's also not very popular with mod developers, and there are few add-ons about. Addressing this problem at least in part is AXP-3 - *Aliens Vs Predator Extreme* - which seeks to make the game closer to the series of films which inspired it. This means a selection of new playable characters including the Combat Synth (think Bishop with attitude), Alien Queen, Exosuit and APESuit (heavy armour),

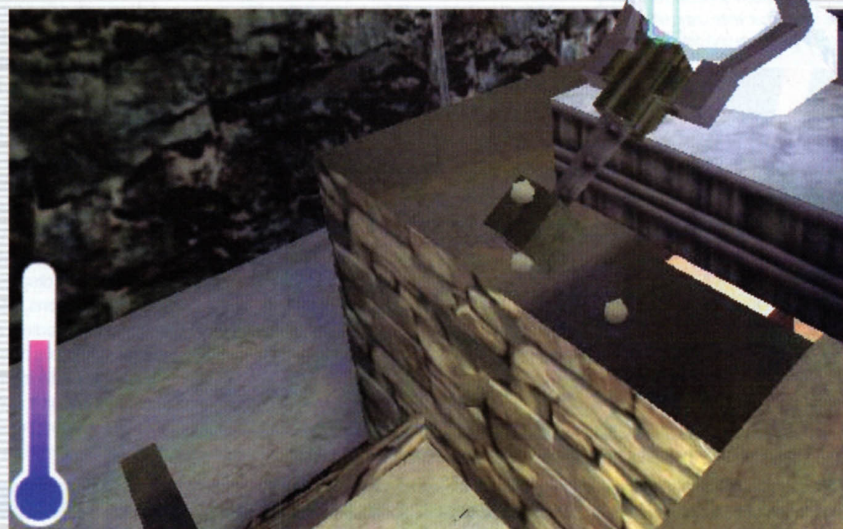
with each having specific combat strengths and weaknesses. There are also a number of weapons tweaks, three new multiplayer maps and new taunts to humiliate your fresh kills.

This is of course a multiplayer-only mod, so online play if you can find a suitable server or LAN games is the only option. This will limit AXP's popularity, but the dedicated fans of AvP Deathmatch should lap it up.

PCZONE VERDICT **66**
Needs a solid constitution

SNOW WARS 1.0

ON THE CD/DVD SIZE 12Mb REQUIRES Full version of *Half-Life*, patched to version 1.110
www.planethalflife.com/snowwar



Snowman-shaped snowball autocannons in *Snow Wars* - why not?

WITH THE days closing in and the 48-hour British summertime now but a distant memory, what better time to get in some snowballing practice in anticipation of the mayhem that the first freeze will surely bring to the UK? Here is *Snow Wars*, a rather off-the-wall but very enjoyable mod that replaces the familiar *Half-Life* armoury with snowballs and sets the game in a variety of suitably wintry scenes with a choice

of Deathmatch and CTF gameplay. It's all rather fun, with surprisingly good maps for such a little-known mod, nicely modelled player skins, including a range of familiar *Half-Life* characters and a couple of other custom models (even Santa Claus!), neat sounds and some genuinely clever ideas. For example, while the only weapons are snowballs, players can carry up to three of them for a fast 'reload' and there are even

player-controllable snowball auto-cannons dotted around the maps. Online support is woefully limited, which makes it almost a LAN-only game, and to keep everyone interested it probably needs more weapons, but it's bags of fun for a simple and quick blast-a-bout.

PCZONE VERDICT **69**
Madly original

DISC PAGES

DISCS & WORDS Mark Eveleigh



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- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen and paper to hand, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a P266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on the discs. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only.

DISCLAIMER

- This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
- Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2: A SPY IN H.A.R.M.'S WAY

CD1/DVD Pub: Vivendi Universal Interactive **Reviewed:** Issue 122 (93%)

Back in the '60s, spies had to use their wit and cunning to get out of the stickiest situations, and Cate Archer is no exception. From coins to bananas, almost anything in Cate's inventory can be used to distract, trick or stun your enemies as you make it through each scenario, hiding bodies as you go.

To give you a taste of what's to come this month when the game hits UK shelves, the demo takes you through a brief tutorial and then into a ninja village. After talking to the automated robotic monitor bird who will teach you the basics, you'll encounter your first ninja. After sneaking up on her, arm your crossbow and be sure to take her out before she glimpses you, as you'll be quite close and she's armed with a Katana.

While the ninjas you'll come up against are equipped with long-range shuriken, you'll still want to keep your distance from them in close combat as after one or two sword swipes, you'll be close to death. Unfortunately, you'll find your skills with a crossbow while moving are somewhat



Not all secret agents are flashers.

hampered by inaccuracy at the lower levels, so the best tactic is to remain unnoticed and covertly take out your enemies. If they're in a group, you can distract one of them by throwing a coin nearby so that they go and investigate. One bolt later, make sure you pick up and hide the bodies before the rest of the group return.

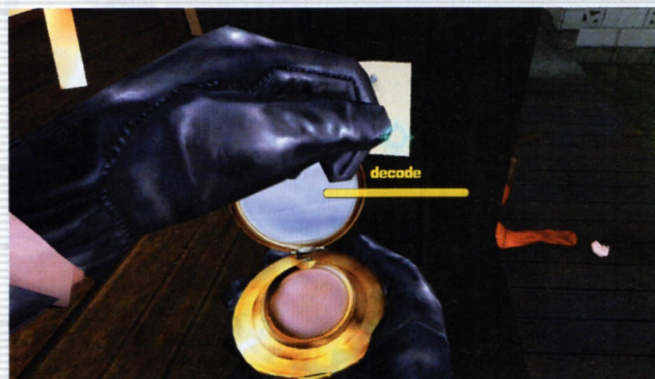
You'll find various notes scattered throughout each of the levels. Be sure to check all of these even if you don't want to read them as they provide vital experience points to build up Cate's skills. You'll also find cunningly disguised Christmas presents in some locations, each containing worthwhile goodies, so be sure to scour each area before moving on to the next.

As you'll notice when playing the demo, the beauty of *NOLF 2* is in its stealthy gameplay, adopting some great techniques to make stealth work using the first-person

perspective. You'll also find some puzzles in there too, decoding messages to progress and collecting intelligence to up your skills, much like an RPG.

Also included on this month's disc is the *NOLF 2* teaser demo, which takes you through a brief scenario while there's a tornado ripping up the scenery around you and you're fighting – you guessed it – ninjas. Showing off the LithTech 2.0 engine in all its glory, it demonstrates just how much the developers at Monolith have come on since *Shogo* and the original *AvP*.

If that doesn't take your breath away, you're guaranteed a number of laughs throughout both demos, and any fans of camp '60s spy movies should have this demo on their system now. Besides, you can pin the ninjas to wooden posts and buildings with the crossbow. What more could you possibly want?



Not your average run-of-the-mill make-up holder.

WALKTHROUGH →

YOU CAN LIVE FOREVER IF YOU FOLLOW THESE TIPS



1 If you don't know how to do something in the game and you hear a man doing an impression of a monitor bird in the background, then follow your ears.



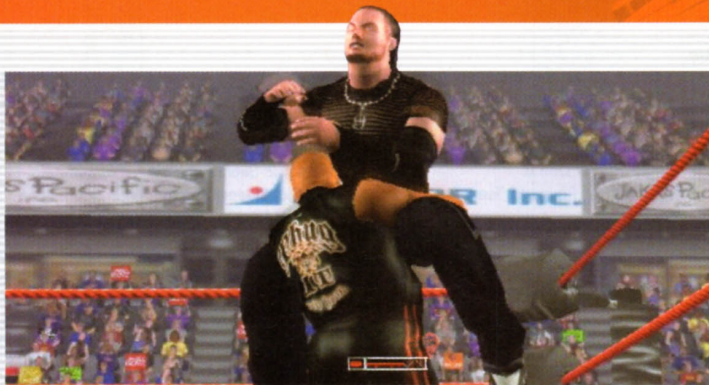
2 Using the G key, you can pick up and hide bodies. If you hide your victims, this will prevent alarms going off. Probably best to make sure that you do that then.



3 If you use the crossbow to accurately pin your opponents to the walls, the other ninjas won't hear their body drop to the ground. Because they'll be pinned, obviously.



4 Use coins to distract enemies and pluck them away from large groups. As soon as you hear it hit the floor, get out your crossbow. And don't forget to collect the coin afterwards.



Looks like he's enjoying that a bit too much.

WWE RAW

CD1/DVD Pub: THQ

Aside from the strapping Mr Korda, we on the ZONE team tend to avoid wearing spandex to work. It's just not the done thing, after all. In the world of the WWE however, spandex is forever in fashion. Quite why this is, nobody knows – after all, being hit by one of those wrestlers pretty much equates to being smacked in the face by a bus, so why not give them some protection like metal plates

or pads or something? It's what they do in the NFL, after all.

Controlling two sweaty men as they pound seven shades of spit from each other, this demo lets you try battling it out with The Rock and Kane. Kane is apparently the brother of The Undertaker, 'spawned from the depths of hell'. One for the fans this, and a rather fine wrestling game at that.

CRAZY TAXI

CD1/DVD Pub: Empire Interactive Reviewed: Issue 119 (81%)

If *GTA III*'s taxi missions didn't do it for you, you might want to give Sega's *Crazy Taxi* a whirl. With green-haired cabbies, rickshaw driving and insane ramps, *Crazy Taxi* proved immensely popular in the arcades and on the Dreamcast, but didn't quite cut the mustard on PC.

Even so, this is an enjoyable demo taking you through some of the Crazy Box missions from the full game in which you can pull stunts, drive like a maniac and see just how many people will jump out of your cab screaming in the process. The full game comes packed with two full cities and another 12 Crazy Box missions, so this is the ideal opportunity to get some practice in free of charge.



Stop for no man, woman or child. Unless they're giving you a fare.

AMERICAN CONQUEST

CD2/DVD Pub: CDV



There'll be trouble at mill.



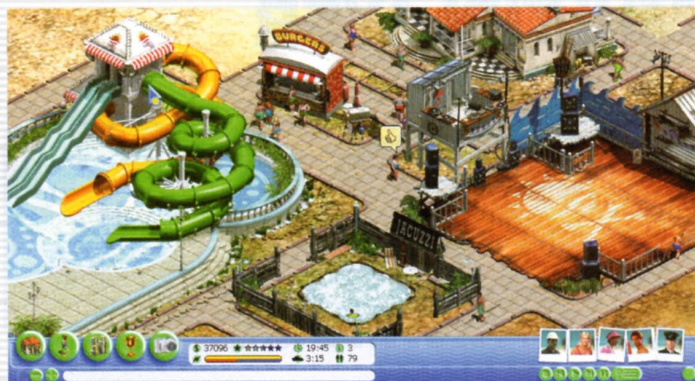
Your base of operations.

Going back to the days when the Mayan gods and native people of the Americas were proven to be weaker than the musket, this *American Conquest* map has you commanding one of two of the 12 armies available in the final game as you stake your claim on the land.

Using a modified *Cossacks* engine, you can literally get hundreds of units on screen at any one time as well as constructing huge settlements from which to build your vast armies. With a rich RTS heritage and a great campaign set-up, *American Conquest* looks very promising indeed.

BEACH LIFE

CD1/DVD Pub: Eidos Reviewed: Issue 118 (52%)



Forget nightclubs, you need water-slides.

More famous for creating the *Fighting Fantasy* series with Steve Jackson, Ian Livingstone's big game for Eidos is something of a change of direction for him. Essentially *Theme Park* on the beach, it's your job to micro-manage a small community of beach-goers ensuring

that everything stays clean, in profit and nice and relaxed.

For those who like this sort of thing, you'll no doubt be happy with the final release, which includes such highlights as wet T-shirt competitions, drunken club riots and general 18-30s inspired 'fun'.



Take him out with a brick if necessary.

ARX FATALIS

CD2/DVD Pub: JoWood

If you like *Morrowind*, *Deus Ex* and *System Shock*, you've obviously got taste. What's more, you'll probably find that you'll enjoy *Arx Fatalis* immensely as it combines the best elements of all three, from the chilling fear factor of *System Shock* to the dark fantasy world of *Morrowind*.

Having chosen your appearance and various attributes, you can set out to escape from the dungeon. You've been imprisoned and now you need to get out to fight the evil cult of Akbaa who are trying to conquer the world of Arx. Starting off in a cell with nothing to your name, escape and vanquish them. Easy.

NEW WORLD ORDER

CD2/DVD Pub: Big Ben Interactive



Hide in the shadows. There's a lot.

New World Order has been posited as the game that might finally overshadow *Counter-Strike*. With stunning levels and graphics that blow CS out of the water, *NWO* is already looking very polished ahead of its release later this month.

Using the classic counter-terrorist versus terrorist set-up, the multiplayer demo takes place in Sweden, with cover at every corner. Long corridors stretch out everywhere, tempting you to throw grenades as each squad tries to engage the other. It's looking good from the demo, but is it going to compete with CS?

DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN MULTIPLAYER

CD2/DVD Pub: NovaLogic



And you thought the explosions in the movie were impressive...

Based on the book by Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down* sees you adopting the role of one of a team of US Army Rangers, going into Somali territory to take on the Mogadishu warlords and save your fallen team-mates.

Sitting on the side of a helicopter and flying into a battlezone is one thing, but

shooting the guys sitting on the side of the helicopter is better still.

The code is early and needs more work – you don't get to blow stuff up or anything like that. But this does give you a taste of what's to come and proves one thing at least: there's life in the *Delta Force* series after voxels.

DVD EXCLUSIVES

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DVD EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

Splinter Cell
Dredd vs Death
FIFA 2003
XIII

DEMOS

Frontline Attack: War Over Europe
Pusher
Iron Storm
Madden NFL 2003
NHL 2003
Emperor: Rise Of The Middle Kingdom
Jacques Villeneuve Racing Season
Sudden Strike 2 Updated Demo

PATCHES

America's Army v1.20 to 1.21
Battlefield 1942 v1.1
Battlefield 1942 Multiplayer Demo v1.1
Geoff Crammond's Grand Prix 4 v4.00
Imperialism 2 v1.03
Soldiers Of Anarchy v1.0.9.77
Soldier Of Fortune 2:
Double Helix v1.2 Update
Unreal Tournament 2003 Demo Patch

MOVIES

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Shadowbane
Civilization III: Play The World
No One Lives Forever 2
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder
Midway Mithis Engine Tech Demo
Soldiers Of Anarchy
Prisoner Of War
Mafia
And a whole lot more...

SCREENSHOT PACKS

Splinter Cell
Command & Conquer: Generals
No One Lives Forever 2
Vietcong
XIII
IL-2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles

MOD WATCH

Aliens Vs Predator Extreme 1.2
Operation Na Pali 1.20
REAL(tm)istic v5
Renegade Legion v1.0
Snow Wars

EXTENDED PLAY

Age Of Wonders II v1.1 Update
Age Of Wonders II Orchestral
Preview Soundtrack

DEMOS

CD1

No One Lives Forever 2
Single-Player Demo
No One Lives Forever 2 Teaser
WWE Raw
Crazy Taxi

Beach Life
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Conflict Desert Storm
Combat Mission: Barbarossa To Berlin

DEMOS

CD2

Arx Fatalis
American Conquest
Delta Force: Black Hawk Down

Multiplayer Demo
New World Order
Stronghold: Crusader

PATCHES

CD2

New World Order Beta Patch v2.1

EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Age Of Wonders II
Deathswamp Campaign
Age Of Wonders II
The Marching Desert Campaign
Age Of Wonders II
Combat Preview Soundtrack

Age Of Wonders II Wallpaper Pack
Aliens Vs Predator 2
Facehuggers Night Storm Map Pack
Splinter Cell Screensaver
Splinter Cell Winamp Skin



"No DVD, no entry mate."

Aliens Vs Predator 2 Black
Wraith's Maps
America's Army v1.20 to 1.21 Patch
Battle Realms Battle Pack 3
Battlefield 1942 Patch v1.1
Battlefield 1942 Demo Patch v1.1
Battlefield 1942 Wallpaper Pack
2000AD Wallpaper Pack
Emperor: Rise Of The Middle
Kingdom Bonus Pack
Splinter Cell Screenshot Pack
Splinter Cell Wallpaper Pack
XIII Screenshot Pack

EXTENDED PLAY CDV STRATEGY SPECIAL

Cossacks: European War v1.02 Demo
Cossacks: Art Of War Demo
Cossacks: Art Of War v1.30 Patch
Sudden Strike 2 Demo
Sudden Strike Forever Patch
Combat Mission:
Barbarossa To Berlin Demo
Combat Mission v1.12 patch

ESSENTIAL PATCHES

Age Of Empires II v2.0a
Aliens Vs Predator 2 v1.0.9.6
Red Alert 2 v1.006

Command & Conquer:
Renegade v1.034
Championship Manager
01/02 v3.9.65
Civilization III v1.29f
Counter-Strike Mod v1.5
Counter-Strike Retail v1.0.0.5
Grand Theft Auto III v1.1
Half-Life v1.1.1.0
IL-2 Sturmovik v1.1a
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast v1.04
Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault v1.11
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind v1.2.0722
Neverwinter Nights Manual
Patch v1.24
Operation Flashpoint 1.46
Quake III Arena Point Release 1.31
Return To Castle Wolfenstein v1.33
Soldier Of Fortune II: Double
Helix v1.1
The Sims v1.1
Warrior Kings v1.2 to 1.3
Warcraft III: Reign Of Chaos v1.2

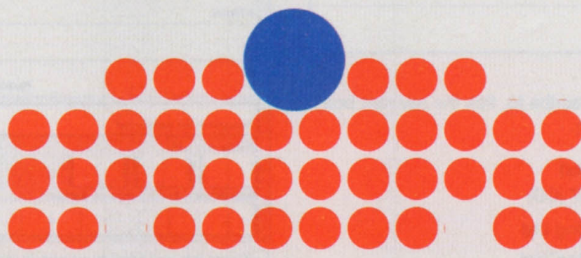
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FIGHT CLUB

Membership is limited to those who like taking their aggression out on others. Martin Korda invites you to join, and choose what you play

COUNTER-STRIKE. Are its days as the game of choice for the Readers' Free-For-All numbered? Both *Battlefield 1942* and *Unreal Tournament*

2003 are threatening to unseat it, but we want your feedback. If you'd like to play a game other than CS during the FFA, then send an email entitled 'Free-For-All Vote'

to letters@pczone.co.uk. The two main contenders are the games I've mentioned, but if any other game gets a vast amount of votes, we'll consider that too.



PC ZONE GAME SERVERS POWERED BY JOLT.CO.UK

OUR SERVERS ARE OPEN 24/7 AND FREE OF CHARGE. WHY PLAY ANYWHERE ELSE?

We've switched our game servers to the ultra-fast Jolt service, which means lag should now be a thing of the past. We've also changed the way you find them, and from now on we'll refer to them by their name rather than by their address. The easiest way to connect is to load the game you wish to

play, go to the multiplayer connection screen and instead of typing in an IP address, type in the name of the server from the list below. They can also be accessed from a server browser such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy. Remember to use the password below, which is updated each month.

TFC Public Server #1 - [24hr 2fort] - tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27025
TFC Public Server #2 - [Favorites] - tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27035

Quake III Public Server [Threewave] - q3.zonegames.co.uk:27970

UT2003 Demo Public Server [Bomb] - ut.zonegames.co.uk:7777

CStrike Public Server #1 - [All Maps] - cs.zonegames.co.uk:27015
CStrike Public Server #2 - [3De] - cs.zonegames.co.uk:27025
CStrike Public Server #3 - [DualDust] - cs.zonegames.co.uk:27035
CStrike Public Server #4 - [No Jumplag] - cs.zonegames.co.uk:27045

Castle Wolfenstein Public Server - rtcw.zonegames.co.uk:27960

PASSWORD: rounded

FREE-FOR-ALL

THURSDAY 7 NOV

6.30pm - 9.00pm

Counter-Strike server

FREE-FOR-ALL CONNECTION DETAILS

Connecting to our Free-For-All Server is extremely simple. And to make things easier still, we have given the server a permanent home. To hook up from within the game, open the *Half-Life* console and type password [pczone](http://pczone.co.uk) and then press enter. After this type connect.ffa.zonegames.co.uk and press enter. You will be taken right there. You can also add the server to popular game browsers such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy 3D by entering ffa.zonegames.co.uk where you would normally provide an IP address. If you experience any problems connecting on the night of the Free-For-All then check our forum at www.pczone.co.uk in case of any last-minute changes or information updates.

LAN ROVER SPECIAL: i-14

COME TO THE BIGGEST LAN EVENT IN THE UK

You've probably heard of Multiplayer's i-series of LAN parties - they're the largest in the UK - and after we travelled down to witness the carnage of i-12 we decided to get involved at i-14. It runs from 9am on November 15 to 6pm on November 17 (the actual gaming is 24/7), and it costs £60 for a participant ticket (flat fee) or £5 per day for spectators. There are 600 spaces up for grabs, but scope for more than 1,000 if the interest's there. So why not sign up and take part in what could be the biggest event of its kind ever.

We'll be down there as well, hosting an invitational tournament on a game of our choice, which you'll be free to take part in. We'll probably be choosing an UT InstaGib match but seeing as we're going to be getting loads of practice in between now and then, we'll probably change our minds after we realise we suck. Beat us and we'll be forced to hand over loads of prizes, as well as begrudgingly buying you a drink. And, as well as the PC ZONE Invitational there are plenty of other tournaments

to join, some for fun and some (*Counter-Strike*, *Quake III*, *Warcraft 3* and *Team Fortress Classic*) with hard cash as prizes. See you there.

Just a quick mention as well for Steve Randall's GGLAN 101 (Oct 26-27) with space for up to 101 people. Get your name on the list at www.ggplan.co.uk. First come, first served.

If you want your LAN party mentioned here, give me two months notice and send some beer and bribes to stevie@arsenalfc.net. Wherever you play, whatever you play, enjoy. Scalper out.

RED NOVEMBER!

Enter our huge online *Counter-Strike* compo and win some massive prizes!

SO YOU THINK your *Counter-Strike* clan is the dog's bollocks? And reckon that if you entered a competition you'd waltz off with the top prizes just in time for Christmas? Prove it. That's the challenge in this massive online *Counter-Strike* tournament, which is brought to you in association with our good friends at Jolt.

We're not restricting entry to the top clans in the country either - we

believe that a true competition should be open to everybody - although there is a restricted field of 128 clans. The tournament will be a five-player double elimination online tournament running from October 28 through to November 20. So pull on your flak vests, lock 'n' load those MP5s and enter your clan online now at: www.pczone.co.uk.

Full rules and sign-up forms are only available online and there's an entry fee of £9.99 per clan (to stop time wasters from entering). The competition is open to any amateur clan.

Prizes for the winning clan will include: AMD Athlon XP 2200 processors, motherboards, 17in monitors from Multivision, Gainward Ultra750 XP graphics cards, ultra-fast RAM from Corsair, gaming

**SIGN UP FOR
THE COMPO AT
WWW.PCZ.JOLT.CO.UK
AND TAKE ON
THE WORLD**

peripherals from Belkin and a dedicated Jolt UberServer for three months. Runners up will get Gainward Pro650XP graphics cards and a Jolt Clanserver for three months.

Red November is sponsored by... AMD, Belkin, Corsair, Gainward, Jolt, Multivision and PC ZONE.

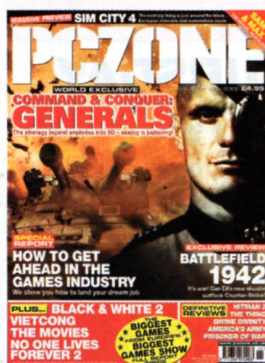




MAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

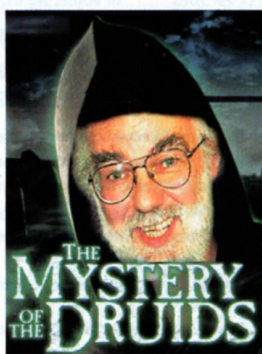
■ HOLDING COURT Dave Woods



REVENGE OF THE DRUIDS

I found the Archbishop of Canterbury's comments interesting, actually I found your way of presenting them more interesting. I find it funny that PC ZONE resorted to tabloid newspaper style tricks to ridicule a person and his opinion. It just seems ironic. When newspapers mention games they paint all of them with the same brush – mind numbing, violence inducing etc, and resort to shock treatment to reinforce their non-existent point. PC ZONE has commented on newspapers' treatment of games before, so why did you try and portray Mr Williams as a weirdo? I found it insulting and unnecessary.

You see I know he doesn't know what he's talking about when it comes to games. I know when he said that the games industry treats kids as consumers he wasn't thinking about the Miyamotos or the Warren Spectors because if he had been he wouldn't have said it. Of course he is thinking of the big faceless corporations pumping out relentless drivel to make money but all industries have their "heartless" commercial side. I know he is wrong but it's



The Man Who Knows has upset someone. Again.

unnecessary for you to ridicule a man who, on the whole, I respect. His views on religion are refreshing and forward thinking. There was no need for the mocking phrases used: "Messenger of God", "free for all rant" and "Mystery of the Druids". He was just stating his views but from your article it seemed like he was a religious fanatic. It was particularly ridiculous for you to try and use the druid thing against him, giving the whole article a mocking tone. I understand that maybe you were trying to be light-hearted and I enjoy that tone in your magazine, it mixes well with honest reviews. Just this time I think you crossed into dangerous tabloid territory.

John McDonnell

DEMO NO SHOW

Why are less and less people releasing demos to go with their games? Loads of the big summer releases have passed without demos, like *Mafia*, *GTA III* and *Neverwinter Nights*, and id has hinted that the *Doom III* demo won't be released until after the full game ships. The reason given is that the developers don't want to delay the release of the game by producing a demo but this is bizarre, as in the past developers used demos to get feedback to fix bugs and balance gameplay. If the average game takes three or four years to produce, making a demo on time should be easy.

Peter O'Dowd

even though you can clearly see that your character isn't carrying anything anywhere near big enough to store your 13 suits of armour and that huge sword you've just found. A puny sorceress can carry more than the Greek navy without it slowing her down or even being visible. Developers need to come up with a way of allowing you to carry what you need, it doesn't have to be massive, but just visible and big enough, or it should at least slow you down if you are carrying too much. For me this would make games more immersive and believable, than a character who can carry a horse in his back pocket.

Andy Blakeley

It does seem to be a trend. Out of all the review covers we've had in the past nine months, only one, *Dungeon Siege*, came with a demo. Thankfully we've reversed the trend this month with two exclusive demos for *No One Lives Forever 2*.

Dungeon Siege came up with a novel twist on the inventory by providing mules that existed just to lug your stuff around. The RSPCA are currently investigating...

OLD MAN

I am deeply disappointed with people who are prejudiced against computer games. One of them is my dad. It's not that he thinks they are bad, evil, or even "the work of the devil" as the Archbishop of Canterbury so bluntly pointed out. He just won't try them. The

MULE ABUSE

I don't know if this applies to everyone but for me what really spoils some games such as *Diablo 2* and *Neverwinter Nights* is the inventory. It's often referred to as your backpack in games,

GOT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST? WRITE TO...

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, 30 CLEVELAND ST, LONDON W1T 4JD, OR EMAIL LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

■ The Letter of the Month wins a spanking new graphics card courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The Blaster 4 Titanium 4400 is as good as the name suggests, and sporting the new GeForce 4 chipset, it gives you more bang than a rabbit stuffed with semtex.



The Man Who Knows is supposed to be a tabloid-like look at some of the more humorous or extreme stories from the world of gaming and if you've read it before you'll have seen every story treated in the same way. For the record, The Archbishop of Canterbury, as misguided as he was, still made a lot more sense about games than any other minor celeb has. And while we did take a couple of cheap shots at him, we're not ridiculing him for being a white druid, we were just stating it as a fact. Unlike certain people we don't mind what others do in the privacy of their own henge.



The mule, one of the obvious innovations introduced to the world by *Dungeon Siege*.

"He was just stating his views but from your article it seemed like he was a religious fanatic"

JOHN MCDONNELL
DEFENDS THE NEW ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

conversation normally goes something like this: "Dad, instead of reading today, why don't you give 'game x' a go?"

"No, I don't really want to."

"Why not?"

"It doesn't interest me."

It's not that the particular game I'm trying to get him to play isn't his genre, or that he's played it before. He hasn't played a game before. The problem is that he is prejudiced and it's people like this that hold the market back.

Paradox1

But to be fair, have you ever shown any interest in playing with a hoop and a stick?

HORSES HEAD

Did the developers of *Mafia* have to include that stupid racing mission? I can't even begin to understand the idiot who decided that this was a good idea. If I want to play a racing game I would have bought one. I don't mind police cars chasing me but that racing mission is so annoying that I'm taking the game back tomorrow. I've been browsing the web about this and everybody is pissed off. Shame on you for not telling us about it before we spent our money.

Claudia

I've just got past the race and it took me about 15 attempts to get it right. Even though it's good to have this sort of divergence in a game I think the developers misjudged it pretty badly, and I think it's way too hard and unforgiving. I'm pretty good at driving games and I nearly snapped the CD in frustration after I reached double figures. It's worth persevering though – the game starts to let rip after this.

The best way to complete it is to battle your way through to the lead after the first corner and keep yourself in front. Take the corners as fast as you can and make sure you only accelerate out of tight bends when your car has straightened out.

SHREDDED

I'm a long time reader of your magazine, and a long time PC user who spends a lot of his time protecting your integrity against my friends. I felt the need to write in response to your Supertest in Issue 120, where you and your panel of respected gamers and writers began to shred the games we love and hate. I find your honesty baffling and your comments harsh at times but I would like to congratulate you on this as I see it as a step forward. I recognise that you do know your games, and that you at the ZONE offices do care somewhat more than your competition, it's great, but why aren't you as brutal in your actual reviews?

Lewis Burnell

IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME

I am writing to you in disgust at the recent news of Greece's new law, which basically makes it illegal to play any form of electronic gaming. As it stands you can face a £40,000 fine or jail for playing *Quake*, *Pokémon* or even *Snake* on your mobile phone.

After reading several articles I believe the law has been introduced to stop electronic gambling. In my opinion this law is about as intelligent as making alcohol illegal to stop people becoming alcoholics. Not everyone is addicted to fruit machines or casino.com 24/7 so why couldn't this law have been made differently



Loads of readers are getting stuck on the infamous race mission in *Mafia*. Are you good enough to crack it?

The reason we do the Supertest is it means we can go back and look at games again once we've all played them for months and know them back to front. It also means that five or six people get to give their views, which gives you a much broader base of opinion. It would be impossible to get that many people to look at each review we do, although we do think our reviewers are harsh when they need to be.

so people can do what they do best and play games.

The Greek government seems to have gone completely mad. Instead of thinking about what they're doing and considering all the options they've taken the easy route and ruined a perfectly acceptable pastime.

Shame on you Greek government, think about what you're doing to the gaming population, worse still, think about what will happen if other

READER REVIEWS

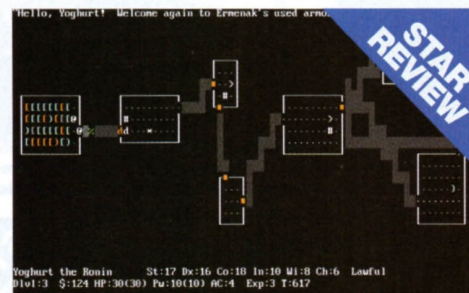
FANCY A CAREER WRITING FOR A GAMES MAG? WELL PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT...

We want reviews of the games you love or the ones you hate. Each one should be between 50 and 350 words and come with a score out of 100. The best one wins a game from the current charts. Send your review to the standard Mailbox address (see boxout) and remember to include your name, address and telephone number.

NETHACK

NOT REVIEWED

www.nethack.org



When asked by a journalist to define jazz, Louis Armstrong said "Man, if you gotta ask now, you'll never know." Trying to capture the spirit of some games is equally impossible. What makes for an addictive title? Why did I play *Command & Conquer* in every spare moment for months?

Superficially, *Nethack* has very little to recommend it. The graphics are ancient (indeed, some versions still use ASCII symbols), the plot is typical RPG nonsense – you must retrieve the fabled Amulet of Yendor from the God Moloch, who has hidden it deep inside the cruel valley of Gehennom. It's remarkably linear – the majority of strategic choices the player will make, he makes before he starts the game. There is little interaction with any of the characters that inhabit the game – other than the shopkeepers, you're pretty much limited to kill it or ignore it. And yet...

Nethack is hard. Very hard – there are tales of people who've played *Nethack* for years and never beaten it, and if you manage to win inside a month's play you're doing exceptionally well. The online community considers it practically impossible to do so without reading any of the numerous strategy guides available. But you'll find yourself dying over and over, just to fire up another character and repeat, determined that this will be the character that makes it.

Why? The game is not broad, but it's exceptionally deep. Your choices and actions do have consequences, and the extent to which this is true continues to astound seasoned *Nethack* players. "The development team thinks of everything" is a widespread mantra in the online community. There are literally hundreds of objects and monsters you'll find along your way – each one has its special property and use, and you learn by using them, just as you would in real life.

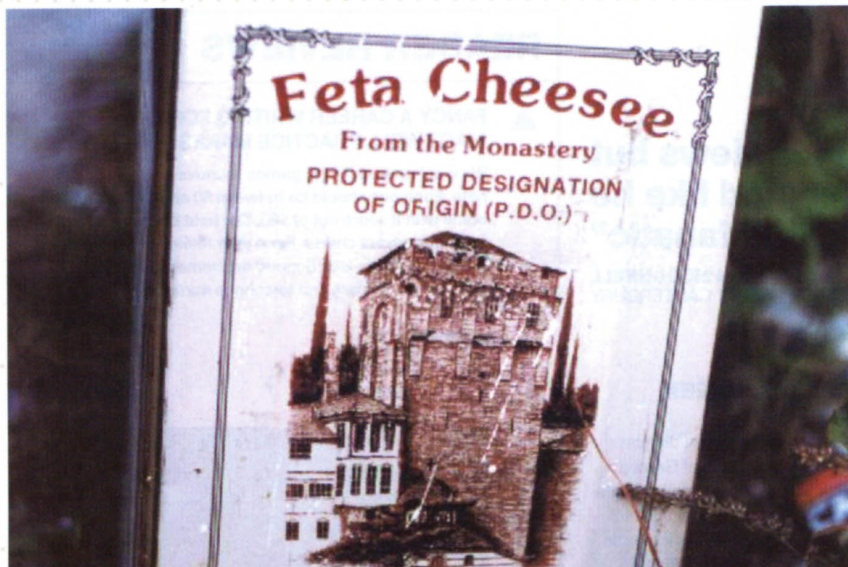
Nethack has the magic ingredient – gameplay – in spades. The online community tells of people who deleted the game when they started dreaming in ASCII. It's that addictive.

Stuart Fraser
SCORE: 92%

countries follow suit. People always accuse computer games of causing violence, this may just be one time when they are right.

James Criglington

We were going to call for a boycott of feta but it seems the Greek courts have more sense than the government. See our special report on p16.



We were going to call for a boycott of this and other Greek products, but it looks like the Greeks are backtracking on their ban, turn to page 16 to find out more.

PHOTO SUPertest

After years of staring at your stupid faces in the mag I decided to take them down the pub and do my own 'Supertest - The Best Photo'. Here are my findings.

Dave Woods: Cheer up for F***'s sake, you're the editor of a top-class games mag, and while you're at it take that ring out of your face, it's not cool and never was.

Steve O'Hagan: Live on the streets of Manchester do you Steve? Try washing your hair, get rid of that gold chain unless you want to be called Gary and smile without the look of a pasty-faced heroin addict.

Martin Korda: Again, smile please, there's nothing to be frightened of.

Anthony Holden: Is that chewing gum behind your ear Anthony? It's really only the hand that bothers us, oh and the sparkly eyes, oh and the fact that the girls on the jury wanted to shag you.

Rhianna Pratchett: Female representation takes *PC ZONE* into the millennium and well done for finding such a sexy looking woman. Male bias jury aside we have one question, which is your best side darling?

Mark Hill: A passport photo classic, we came to the conclusion that you are Anthony's rougher twin brother. Good to see someone with a decent haircut.

Paul Presley: Are you reading the news or asking me for a fight? The thinning gelled hair tells all, we say you are 35, married with a lovely daughter. You drive a sensible car like a Vauxhall or a Renault and live in deepest Surrey or Oxfordshire. Your nickname at school was Elvis, which you thought was cool, oh and you have a cat named Tinky - are we close?

Adam Phillips: Life's not that bad Martin Clunes.

Phil Wand: Smart, ageing well and smiling, maybe don't do the top button up though.



The winner of the photo Supertest? You've got to be kidding!

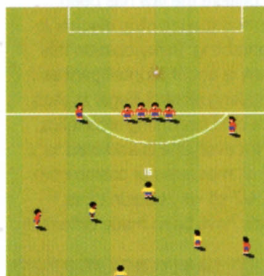
The Verdict

Phil wins by the skin of his balding head. We all agreed that Phil's charm shone through in black and white - it was of utmost importance that our winner could smile and look natural.

Fuzzy Fre@k

That even made me smile, although it was Anthony who forced me to print it.

THE SENSIBLE WORLD OF XP



Sensible Soccer: they just don't make them like this anymore.

I would like you to re-assess your A-List as the 'Compatibility mode' in Windows XP is magic. What effect does this have on anyone running this OS you wonder? Well for four years now I have been unable to play *Sensible World of Soccer*, or the *European Championship Edition* version of the game due to my system being too quick. *Sensi* and its updates are still the best soccer games on the market and EA needs to go a long way with *FIFA* before they can overtake the gameplay. Windows XP enables me to run this great game and to make things even better, if you hunt around on the net you can find updates for more recent seasons. I think you should bring back *Sensible Soccer*, but the point is this Compatibility Mode should work for any old game that ran under DOS or Windows 95.

MadBandit

Check out our Games That Changed The World feature on page 150 for some more *Sensi* antics. [X]

READER REVIEWS

MAFIA

PC ZONE ISSUE 119 92%

We said... "One day we'll be able to have a game with the freedom, depth and raw fun of *GTA III* and the story, characterisation and class of *Mafia*. For now though, they're both essential."



I was expecting a 1930s *GTA III* but I was wrong. My initial reaction was one of amazement at the level of detail in the game. The intro is breathtaking and you think "gee I hope the game's like this." Luckily it doesn't disappoint - tyres can be shot out (tricky while driving), making vehicles damn near impossible to steer and people can be shot through windows causing them to slump over in the seat.

Yes, there are obvious comparisons to make, however whereas *GTA III* provides a comparatively simple arcade style drive 'n' shoot, save, steal and drive a bit more, this game sucks you into that clichéd mob culture together with a more realistic 3D experience. The 1930s come to life with 65 cars and a city that shames Liberty Island.

You assume the role of Tommy a cabbie who, through no real fault of his own, gets involved with local Mobsters. The game takes place some years on from Tommy's Mob shenanigans while he spills the beans about 'da Family' to an Irish cop in exchange for protection. The game skips back and forth in time while Tommy recounts his shady past. As the tales become more recent, Tommy physically grows older in the missions, the cars get newer and the city alters... how cool is that?

The missions are quality, like something out of your favourite gangster movie and nicely varied. One very appealing feature is that they can be completed in almost any way you see fit. However, it's not easy being a wise guy - get caught speeding, carrying a weapon by the cops while on a job or press the wrong key and make a wrong turn and it's back to the beginning of the mission. Guaranteed, after an hour you'll be shaking the cat yelling, "If they kill one of yours, you kill five of theirs!"

Lenina Huxley
SCORE: 96%

IS YOURS A GOLDEN SAMPLE?

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GAINWARD

THE PCZONE A-LIST

SHOOTERS

MEDAL OF HONOR



It may have taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of toppling *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an unparalleled sense of atmosphere and intensity, not to mention beautifully scripted scenes. It's also the first game that Richie has finished three times in as many months, and the first FPS Rhianna has finished in her life, which gives you some indication of the game's worth.

PUB EA DEV 2015

PCZ ISSUE 112



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent Opposing Force add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Vivendi DEV Valve Software

PCZ ISSUE 71



MAFIA

From the makers of *Hidden & Dangerous* and just as compelling, this is the game of every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere, great AI – it's a classic in every respect. Badabing!

PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion

PCZ ISSUE 119



JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

The first *Star Wars* game to be awarded a PC ZONE Classic award since the original *Jedi Knight* back in 1997. This is more than just a simple FPS, it's frustrating, rewarding and extremely good fun. A new hope has come.

PUB Activision DEV Raven

PCZ ISSUE 115



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

The bloodiest game in the world is back, but this time there's a brilliant game cowering beneath the carnage. Sublime AI is the chief culprit and if you can stomach the violence this is a must buy.

PUB Activision DEV Raven

PCZ ISSUE 118



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

If we rated games on atmosphere and tension *AvP2* would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest.

PUB Vivendi DEV Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 110



MAX PAYNE

It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.

PUB Take 2 DEV Remedy

PCZ ISSUE 107



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

A mixed bag. Visually it might be at the top of the pile, but the single-player game has been completely eclipsed by *Medal Of Honor*. Forget that and head for the multiplayer action instead, where the game comes into its own.

PUB Activision DEV Gray Matter/Nerve

PCZ ISSUE 112



NEW ENTRY BATTLEFIELD 1942

Even though it features a disappointing and heavily bugged single-player campaign, *Battlefield* has some of the most compelling team-based multiplayer games ever. A must have for any online shooter fan.

PUB EA DEV Digital Illusions

PCZ ISSUE 121



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Unreal Tournament's multiplayer mode is more than a match for *Quake III*, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. Single-player mode is a tad short, but it's still more of a challenge than most.

PUB Infogrames DEV Epic/Digital Extremes

PCZ ISSUE 81

STRATEGY

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR



NEW ENTRY A sequel to the stunning *Shogun: Total War* (now available on budget), *Medieval* offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based Risk-style strategy map are a multitude of new options, both political, diplomatic and military. Breathtaking in every way, strategy games just don't come any better than this.

PUB Activision

DEV Creative Assembly

PCZ ISSUE 120



WARRIOR KINGS

A visually stunning and hugely ambitious RTS that melds the strategic diversity of *Battle Realms* with the huge 3D rolling landscapes of *Shogun*. With a compelling story to boot, no strategy fan should be without a copy.

PUB Microids DEV Black Cactus

PCZ ISSUE 114



COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

PUB Eidos DEV Pyro Studio

PCZ ISSUE 108



COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.

PUB CDV DEV GSC Gameworld

PCZ ISSUE 101



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-er-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.

PUB EON DEV Bitmap Brothers

PCZ ISSUE 101



ETHERLORDS

This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering – fantastic stuff.

PUB JoWooD DEV Nival Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 112



WARCRAFT III

While not a huge departure from the original, *Warcraft III* is an extremely enjoyable and polished package. The storyline is brilliant and the multiplayer action dangerously addictive. Simple, solid entertainment.

PUB VU Games DEV Blizzard

PCZ ISSUE 119



BATTLE REALMS

Emerging from the quagmire of all too similar RTS games this is a genuinely ground-breaking strategy game. It does have its flaws which include a tedious plot, but the great use of sound, visuals and gameplay shine through.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Liquid Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 111



AGE OF EMPIRES II: GOLD EDITION

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age of Empires II* the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. A great RTS.

PUB Microsoft DEV Ensemble Studios

PCZ ISSUE 84



SUDDEN STRIKE

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with classic RTS gameplay in order to create a compelling strategy title. Its large-scale battles, huge selection of units and superb interface make it a must for RTS fans.

PUB CDV DEV Fireglow

PCZ ISSUE 96

Welcome to the **PC ZONE A-List**, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers. Get in.

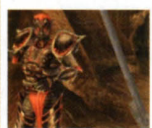
◀ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES ▶

DEUS EX



Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his magnum opus. Combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail, combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is a landmark in gaming.

PUB Eidos DEV Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Bethesda Softworks
PCZ ISSUE 117



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The makers of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series prove they are still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.

PUB Infogrames DEV Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 118



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG.

PUB Interplay DEV Black Isle Studio
PCZ ISSUE 87



DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft DEV Gas Powered Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 80



BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.

PUB Interplay DEV Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 96



NEW ENTRY DIVINE DIVINITY

This epic RPG contains the action of *Diablo II* combined with the storyline of the *Baldur's Gate* series, not to mention about 200 hours of gameplay in a huge fantasy world. The name may be a bit silly, but the gameplay certainly isn't.

PUB CDV DEV Larian Studios
PCZ ISSUE 121



FREEDOM FORCE

Control your own group of superheroes in this immersive and fully destructible comic book world. It may not be the most sophisticated and bearded of RPGs, but *Freedom Force* is unadulterated bubble-gum fun at its best.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



DIABLO II

The sequel to the definitive hack 'n' slash took all the qualities of the original into a massive world of beautifully simplistic yet compelling gameplay. With a huge online community and an excellent expansion, *DII* is as addictive as ever.

PUB VJ Games DEV Blizzard
PCZ ISSUE 84

◀ ACTION/ADVENTURE ▶

GRIM FANDANGO



If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. The comic interaction between Manny and Glottis is a high watermark for scripting in games, while sublime graphics and laugh-out-loud humour ensure it's at the top of its genre. A word of warning though: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 71



SOUL REAVER 2

While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.

PUB Eidos DEV Crystal Dynamics
PCZ ISSUE 111



DISCWORLD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it in our opinion.

PUB Infogrames DEV Perfect Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 79



NEW ENTRY THE THING

Drawing on some brilliant raw material from John Carpenter's classic horror movie, this survival action horror picks up the story where the film left off. It's one of the best film spin-offs around, with tense atmosphere and good gameplay.

PUB Black Label Games DEV Computer Artworks
PCZ ISSUE 121



NEW ENTRY PRISONER OF WAR

One of the most original games out there with a light-hearted setting and an atmospheric soundtrack, which makes it more of an adventure rather than an action title. *POW* makes a refreshing change from the usual mass slaughter fare.

PUB Codemasters DEV Wide Games
PCZ ISSUE 121



NEW ENTRY HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

The revamped *Hitman* engine is nothing short of breathtaking, blessing the sequel with gorgeous graphics that fit well with the refined controls and superbly realistic AI. *Hitman 2* is solid and enjoyable with a great sense of gameplay freedom.

PUB Eidos DEV IO
PCZ ISSUE 121



PROJECT EDEN

Giving you control of four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis, *Eden* is at once predictable and innovative. The combat and AI may be dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.

PUB Eidos DEV Core Design
PCZ ISSUE 107



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, but with many of the adventure elements still in place. The result is surprisingly good, but not for traditionalists.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 84



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

One of the hardest things to do in a game is to make your audience laugh with you rather than at you, and *Escape From Monkey Island* is undoubtedly one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in recent years.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 98



METAL GEAR SOLID

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses make it a thing of beauty.

PUB Microsoft DEV Konami
PCZ ISSUE 96

◀ GOD GAMES ▶

BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box.

PUB EA **DEV** Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100



CIVILIZATION III

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Firaxis Games
PCZ ISSUE 111



THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthy long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.

PUB EA **DEV** Maxis/EA
PCZ ISSUE 87



CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Impressions
PCZ ISSUE 70



SIMCITY 3000

Ten years on, the offspring of the original building game *SimCity* still remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUB EA **DEV** Maxis
PCZ ISSUE 74



NEW ENTRY EMPEROR: ROMK

This intricate game comes from the makers of *Zeus* and *Caesar* – and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay over 50 missions, spanning seven historical campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you'll also have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Breakaway Games
PCZ ISSUE 121



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

Design and build your own theme park and then pack it full of the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up, while trying to keep the cash and the punters coming in. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Chris Sawyer
PCZ ISSUE 75



MONOPOLY TYCOON

This mixture of the classic board game and a *Theme Park/SimCity*-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real-time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

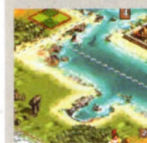
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Deep Red
PCZ ISSUE 110



DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA **DEV** Bullfrog
PCZ ISSUE 79



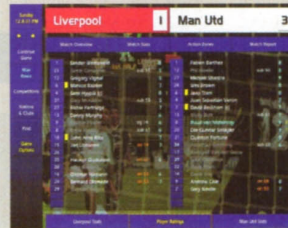
CALL TO POWER II

It might not have the official endorsement, but *Call To Power II* is a spiritual successor to one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *Civilization II*. The gameplay is familiar but every element has been polished and the result is a hugely challenging and rewarding experience. It's still well worth seeking out.

PUB Activision **DEV** Activision
PCZ ISSUE 98

◀ SPORT ▶

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 01/02



Another year, another update and yet another improvement on the greatest sports management game of all time, one that will literally consume your life. New features this time around include masked attributes (forcing you to scout for talent), updated team and player stats, and all of the new rules and regulations imposed by FIFA for the new season.

Pure genius.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 108



VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, are its truly sublime multiplayer options.

PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Rowan Software
PCZ ISSUE 114



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

This 3rd edition of Tony Hawk's classic skateboarding game is an absolute joy to play. It features enormous levels, even more interaction and a totally kick-ass soundtrack.

PUB Activision **DEV** Neversoft Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 98



VIRTUAL POOL 3

Easily the best cue-based game around, *VP3* features some near perfect physics and excellent graphics. The career and multiplayer modes are highly entertaining, and a superb tutorial will have you clearing up in no time.

PUB Interplay **DEV** Celeris
PCZ ISSUE 99



FIFA 2002

Still the best PC football game despite some irksome flaws, this graphically improved update introduces nuances such as through-ball and one-two options, which provide greater variation but less passing accuracy.

PUB Electronic Arts **DEV** EA Sports
PCZ ISSUE 110

◀ MULTIPLAYER MODS ▶

DAY OF DEFEAT



Day Of Defeat is one multiplayer mod that has gone from strength to strength with every incarnation. The brilliant level design and atmospheric detail have made sure that it's currently being played online by more people than both *Medal Of Honor* and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. The only difference is that *DOD* is completely free! The most recent version (3.0) is even better than ever and with more maps and respawning options, it's still the best WWII multiplayer mod around.

WEB www.dayofdefeatmod.com

PCZ 120



COUNTER-STRIKE

It may have dominated the multiplayer mod scene for years but even good old *Counter-Strike* is getting a bit long in the tooth. It's still the most famous mod in the world, and proof that bedroom coding is in better health than ever.

WEB www.counter-strike.net

PCZ ISSUE 109



TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

A great *Half-Life* squad-based action game with nine classes, a wide variety of weaponry and many map variations. The action focuses on infiltrating enemy bases, and the frantic gameplay requires more manual dexterity than most.

WEB www.planethalflife.com/tfc

PCZ ISSUE 94



STRIKE FORCE

Hot on the heels of *Counter-Strike* comes this superb total conversion mod for *Unreal Tournament*. It boasts outstanding maps and attention to detail, including heartbeat monitors that measure stress and infrared laser dot aiming.

WEB www.strikeforcecenter.com

PCZ ISSUE 109



JAILBREAK: POW

Two sides, two jails and a lot of fun. If you get fragged you get jailed and you have to stay until you're released. When all the team is in jail you get executed. All-in-all, one of the best *Quake III* mods available.

WEB www.planetquake.com/bkp

PCZ ISSUE 109

◀ FLIGHT SIMS ▶

IL-2 STURMOVIK



Combining incredible atmosphere, sound and visuals with possibly the most realistic flight model to date, *IL-2* puts you behind the flight stick of a number of stunningly reproduced WWII combat planes. The attention to detail is breathtaking and the easy-to-use editor allows endless months of replayability. A must-have for any real combat flight sim fanatic.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV 1C: Maddox Games

PCZ ISSUE 110



MS FLIGHT SIM 2002

With more polish than previous versions, this professional edition offers players more planes, extra flight loggings and improved graphics. It might not be able to teach you how to fly, but it's the closest you'll get without paying for lessons.

PUB Microsoft DEV BAO

PCZ ISSUE 111



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually feel 'right'. Tally ho!

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Rowan Software

PCZ ISSUE 103



FALCON 4

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.

PUB Infogrames DEV Microprose

PCZ ISSUE 72



B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

B-17 reproduces the experience of piloting a World War II bomber. Just about everything is covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks everywhere.

PUB Infogrames DEV Wayward Simulations

PCZ ISSUE 96

◀ 3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky Red Hammer add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

PUB Codemasters DEV Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104



GHOST RECON

A superb squad-based shooter, which masterfully combines tactics and action. The levels range from wide-open landscapes to claustrophobic city streets, in what is a stunning evocation of special forces warfare.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Red Storm Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 110



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Looking old and with most of the original bugs intact, *Hidden & Dangerous* is still a great WWII game featuring some incredibly varied levels and a stirring soundtrack. Look out for the supposedly bug-free Deluxe release next issue.

PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion Software

PCZ ISSUE 79



HOSTILE WATERS

A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

PUB Rage DEV Rage Software

PCZ ISSUE 101



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes RTS, RPG, real-time and third-person shooter combat elements. It's also rather funny and features near-naked women with blue skin.

PUB Interplay DEV Planet Moon Studios

PCZ ISSUE 95

◀ ALL-TIME CLASSICS ▶

FOUR DECADES OF VIDEOGAMES AND YOU HAVE TO PICK TEN ALL-TIME CLASSICS? OUR NEW ASSOCIATE EDITOR, JAMIE SEFTON AGONISED FOR DAYS BEFORE EMERGING WITH THE FOLLOWING...



PAC-MAN (COIN-OP)

In a word – genius. Namco's colourful 2D maze game containing yellow power pill chomping yellow pizza pies who chase ghosts became an obsession. I recently found a pile of old school notebooks bereft of work but packed with pages of *Pac-Man* doodles. Simple, addictive gameplay with some of the most recognisable tunes and sound effects ever created.



JET PAC (ZX SPECTRUM)

This was the first game I saw on the ZX Spectrum that actually had those longed for "arcade-quality graphics". An astronaut zooming about on platforms, collecting parts of a spaceship and blasting aliens. Class. Developer Ultimate Play The Game spawned a host of other classics such as *Knight Lore*, before turning into Rare and coding *GoldenEye 007*.



ELITE (BBC B)

David Braben and Ian Bell's extravagant vector-drawn 3D space shooter and trading game completely took over my life for almost a year. It was the freedom to become whatever character you wanted – such as bounty hunter or miner – that made the game so mind-blowing. The day I could finally afford a docking computer still remains a gaming career highlight.



DARK FORCES (PC)

Doom is an all-time classic, but to me, *Dark Forces* was a more personal revelation – "You can shoot stormtroopers in 3D!" Even though my terrible sound card made the epic *Star Wars* score sound like it was being played by John Shuttleworth, *Dark Forces* was still an immense experience. I was terrified the first time I was hunted by a robotic dark trooper in an air duct.



TIE FIGHTER (PC)

It wasn't just the sublime controls and the fact you could destroy Luke Skywalker's buddies that made *Tie Fighter* a classic, it was the intriguing sub-plot that had you secretly working for the Order of the Emperor. This meant you often had conflicting mission objectives – capture the rebels for your commander or blast them for Palpatine's secret handshake crowd?



HALF-LIFE (PC)

After *Doom* and *Quake* came *Half-Life*. Valve's game re-defined the FPS genre, having a superb plot overflowing with frightening set-piece after set-piece, advanced enemy AI, gruesome creatures, atmospheric sound effects and cool weapons. The add-ons were excellent and of course you can't mention *HL* without talking about a certain online mod called *Counter-Strike*.



SUPER MARIO 64 (NINTENDO 64)

I love *Mario* games, they're always sprinkled with pure magic dust from games guru Shigeru Miyamoto. The first time I played this title along with the new analogue N64 controller I had an epiphany. To just call it a platformer is almost an insult, as *Super Mario 64* provides an action/adventure with some of the most fiendish puzzles, glorious surprises and best level design ever.



GRAND THEFT AUTO III (PC)

GTA III is a violent playground that gives you the freedom to be as bad as you like. Car-jack vehicles, run tramps over, walk about shooting innocent passers-by with a machine gun, become a taxi driver, blow-up police helicopters – the possibilities are almost endless. Ultra violent, with sophisticated adult humour, *GTA III* is a videogames benchmark.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER (PS2)

Ever since *Jon Ritman's Match Day* on the Speccy, I've been on a quest to find the footy game Holy Grail. Amiga's *Sensible World Of Soccer* was wonderful and so was Konami's *ISS*. However, the smooth animation, intuitive passing and beautiful goals of *Pro Evolution Soccer* was almost perfect. The fantastic news? Forthcoming sequel *PES 2* is even better...



HALO (XBOX)

From the first five minutes, when you're thrown into a fight for survival against the Covenant aliens invading your ship, *Halo* constantly amazes. The environments are beautifully detailed, the physics are superb, the vehicles top fun, the weapons meaty and the AI of your fellow starship troopers eerily realistic. It's also coming to PC with online multiplayer action.

VIRGIN LOVES



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

The ultimate in first-person action returns! Unreal Tournament 2003 is the sequel to the mind-blowing, award-winning action of Unreal Tournament.

Explore up to 30 original exotic indoor and outdoor environments, each featuring jaw-dropping dynamic volumetrically lit particle systems. Choose from up to 50 new highly individualised characters with their own abilities and fire to your hearts' desire with new weapons and updated favourites from the original such as Flak Cannon, Assault Rifle, Shock Rifle, Link Gun, and Ion Cannon

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WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

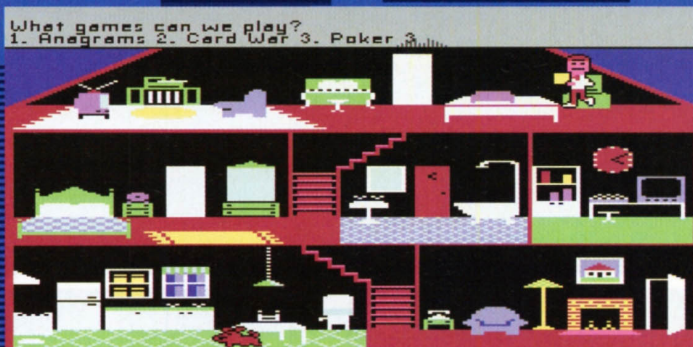
Buy at virgin.com/megastores



RETRO ZONE

ANOTHER DOSE OF GAMING NOSTALGIA

"It wasn't all jazz piano and poker – you had to keep Mr L C Person and his hound fed and watered"



A man, living alone, with a small dog... he must be gay.

LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE

Can't get enough of The Sims? Then why not go back in time...

THE SIMS may well have been the most original title to hit the PC since a greasy oik going by the name of William Gates decided to make the PC a bit more user friendly. But way back while he was drawing up a blueprint for world domination and *The Sims*' creator Will Wright began laying the foundations for *SimCity* with his game *Micropolis*, a young David Crane (creator of *Pitfall* and cofounder of Activision) was himself

sowing the seeds for artificial life on the humble Commodore 64.

Little Computer People began life as *Pet Person*, a kind of early Tamagotchi where you watched your primitive man develop without any interaction. Crane saw the obvious potential for an interactive computer game and spent the next year fine-tuning and adding to the work already done by *Pet Person*'s creator Rich Gold.

Closer to *The Numbskulls* than *The Sims*, the titular Computer Person lived inside your computer, within a rather spacious house. Left to his own devices he'd roam the rooms doing whatever took his fancy; from typing at his computer in the study, to tinkling the ivories in the attic. However, rather than just watch the stickman's antics, you could butt in and ask him to perform for you – just so long as you asked nicely.

RETRO ZONE SEPTEMBER 1985

A young, spotty and bespectacled Richie Shoemaker asks his parents for an Oric-1 for Christmas. He was disappointed three months later to find a ZX Spectrum and a copy of *Horace Goes Skiing* in his stocking

But it wasn't all jazz piano and poker – you had to keep Mr L C Person and his silicon hound fed and watered otherwise they would fall ill and die. Yes, those *Little Computer People* could expire, but unfortunately not in as many interesting ways as the increasingly irritating *Sims*, like the walling-in option that became a firm *ZONE* favourite.

Ironically *Little Computer People* failed to light up the charts and plans for add-ons featuring entire apartment blocks, the ability to create your own houses and full-time LCP jobs never got past the drawing board. Today there remain only vain hopes of a sequel but with the success of EA's *The Sims*, don't write off the chances of arch-rivals Activision looking through its back catalogue for inspiration. There are only so many extreme sports games one can stomach after all.



Apparently each copy of the game was different.



The Little Computer People were notoriously good at poker.

THE BEST OF THE REST



FAIRLIGHT (Spectrum)

Fairlight took the isometric adventure pioneered by *Ultimate's Knight Lore* and created a more intense and rewarding experience, reminiscent of the text adventures of *Level 9*. The 80-odd locations were all distinct, every object could be picked up and used and you could leave a location safe in the knowledge that the chair you left on the table would still be there when you returned.



SILENT SERVICE (C64/PC)

Sid Meier spent much of the '80s creating realistic sims rather than the strategy games he is more well known for. *Silent Service* recreated the war between the Pacific waves incredibly well. Players could command a range of WWII subs across a number of command screens, use radar, set a course across the ocean, launch torpedoes or surface and fire off a few rounds from the deck cannon.



NIGHTSHADE (Spectrum)

With *Nightshade*, developer Ultimate Play The Game was beginning to retread familiar ground. Similar to *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8*, *Nightshade* saw you saving the world by collecting four special objects. The setting was promising, with rotting corpses roaming the gloomy streets. In reality it seemed the old gooey blobs and jelly creatures had just been given another run. Not great.



BOUNTY BOB (C64/Spectrum)

Remember *Miner 2049er*? No. How about *Manic Miner*? Thought so. Well, *Manic Miner* was only meant as a rip-off of the lesser known C64 hit, to which *Bounty Bob* was the sequel. Bob's subterranean adventures may not be as memorable as *Miner Willy's* toilet evading endeavours, but with the platforming genre now being flooded with clones, looking back *BB* was a class act.

NEWS

GAMING NEWS FROM SEPTEMBER 1985

- Sinclair Research deny the existence of 'Enigma' a new Sinclair 16-bit, 1Mb RAM computer reported to be a follow-up to the ill-fated QL computer.
- Beyond Software, famous for Mike Singleton's *Lords Of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge*, say the third in the trilogy *Eye Of The Moon*, is unlikely to be released until spring 1986. We're still waiting.
- Microsoft release Windows to universal derision. Considered 'buggy, crude and slow', it isn't long before Apple threatens legal action, warning the bespectacled Bill Gates that Windows infringes on Apple's copyrights and that Microsoft has stolen trade secrets.



GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

SENSIBLE SOCCER

It may not have looked like a beautiful game, but it was a sublime example of intuitive gameplay at its best. *Steve Hill* talks to creator *Jon Hare* about all things Sensible

GAME *Sensible Soccer*

DEVELOPER Sensible Software

RELEASED 1992

INFLUENCED *Goal!*, *Total Soccer* and a whole load of *Sensi* Updates

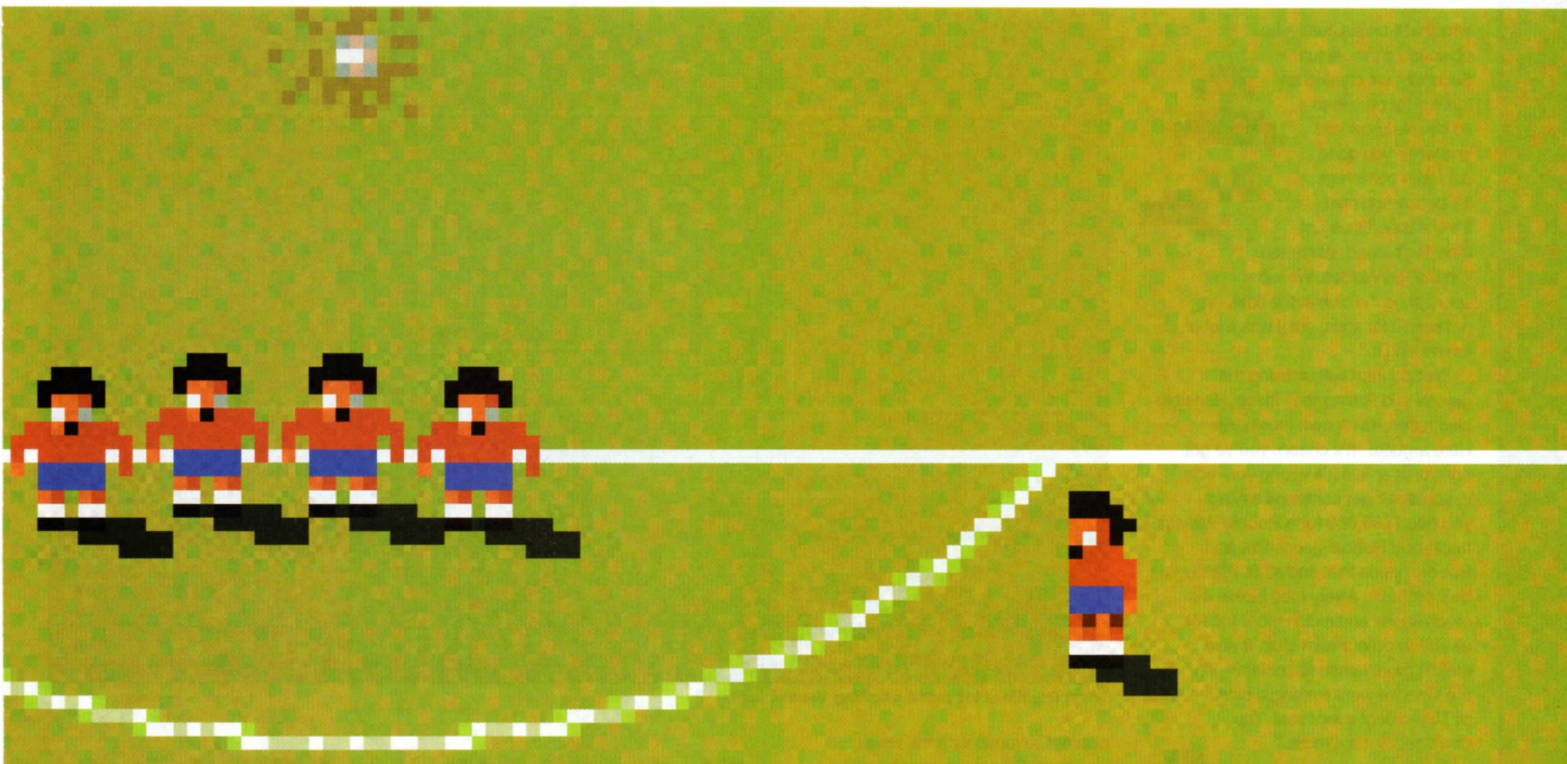
PROFILE

Despite only being in his mid-30s, he can truly be described as a veteran of the games industry, and claims to have worked on some 31 different games.



NAME Jon Hare
ROLE ON SENSIBLE SOCCER
Designer

NOW DOING Just finished *Mike Tyson Boxing* for Codemasters



NINE MONTHS. That's how long it took to make *Sensible Soccer*, from conception to glorious birth. Nowadays it takes nine months for a focus group to decide on the colour of the packaging. Equally impressive is the fact that the game was put together by a core team of just two people, a far cry from the roomfuls of faceless drones slaving away over the latest hollow graphical showpiece. Not to suggest that modern games are rubbish – some of them are great – but it's hard to think of more than a handful that will still be talked about in ten years' time.



A decade ago, the Amiga was king, and for football fans, *Kick Off* was the game of choice. That proved to be the case in the Saffron Walden offices of burgeoning developer, Sensible Software, as founder Jon Hare explains over a slew of lagers and posh kebabs.

"While we were making *Megalomania*, which was our first Amiga game, we were playing *Kick Off* all the time in the gaps, and it was wasting a lot of our time. It actually ended up on the train track outside our window at one stage. There were just so many frustrating bugs. It was a good game, but it was full of irritating things that pissed us off too much."

Their copy of *Kick Off* might have ended up crushed beneath the wheels of the 5.15 to Liverpool St, but it did at least inspire Sensible to try and better it. "I think it did," concedes Hare. "We had the little men from *Megalomania*, and basically we

just dressed them up in football kits. The actual little Sensible men that people know from *Sensible Soccer*, *Cannon Fodder* and *Sensible Golf*, are from *Megalomania*."

Those little men that give the game its distinctive look are a world away from the motion-captured Beckhams and Owens of today's football games, but the primitive graphics masked an exquisitely playable game that could prove chronically addictive. Games that changed the world is an extravagant claim, but Hare admits that over-indulgence in *Sensi* may well have "cost people their degrees."

That's not as ludicrous as it sounds, as I actually found out to my cost. Chancing upon the game in the third year of university, I rapidly became hooked, with academia firmly relegated to a back seat. The countless hours invested in playing *Sensi* weren't completely wasted though. Having randomly managed to secure an interview at a PC magazine, on declaring *Sensible Soccer* to be my favourite game, I promptly bagged the job.

THE AMIGA MAN

The original Amiga version of *Sensible Soccer* was embraced by the critics, and as Hare says: "It made a lot of money as well. The first one sold about 200,000 maybe. The whole thing, if you add them all together, about two million." *Sensi* did eventually migrate onto the PC, but in common with most aficionados, Hare believes that the definitive version was "the last Amiga one because we'd refined it and refined it by then."

"The primitive graphics masked an exquisitely playable game that could prove chronically addictive"

He's probably right, but *Sensible World Of Soccer '96/'97* on the PC (from which these screenshots were taken) is still a phenomenally playable game, as attested by the fact that I am writing these words with chafed thumbs, having played through an entire season in the name of research. Hare agrees: "That was a good game, a bit faster."

It also had a rudimentary but highly effective management option, and at the time *SWOS* provided something of an antidote to the more complex *Championship Manager 2*. It still remains one of the few games to successfully combine arcade action with management, and one of the even fewer games worth downgrading your PC to play.

FISH SUPPER

As well as being a great game, *Sensible Soccer* always had a sense of humour, as exemplified by the surreal custom teams,

with club and player names supplanted by obscurely themed lists. Old Dear's Menu, for instance, which featured a player called A Nice Bit Of Fish (something that erstwhile Zoner Paul Mallinson admits to thinking about every few weeks, usually when he's in the chippy). It was certainly a unique approach.

"Absolutely," says Hare. "I had a lot of fun with those. I did the majority of them. Some of the guys in the office did some as well, but that Old Dear's Menu was one of mine. There may have been one or two that my kids did as well in the later versions, because we had so many to fill in and there were so many versions. We did *Kebab Shop* as well, I remember."

And *Essex Girls*?

"For some of those we'd be sitting in the office: 'I got two more teams left to do. What do you think?', 'What about *Essex Girls*?' and everyone in the office shouts out names and we'd just write them in, change their hair colour and off you go. These days, you can't really get away with that humour. But I don't think it was just us. I think we came from a time when everyone was doing their own thing and we just carried on doing it. It was part of what we were known for, so we could get away with it in the main."

VIDEO NASTY

Sensible Software was also known for filming its own comedy intro videos, including the one for *SWOS*.

"It's just people having a bit of fun," says Hare. "There are several reasons

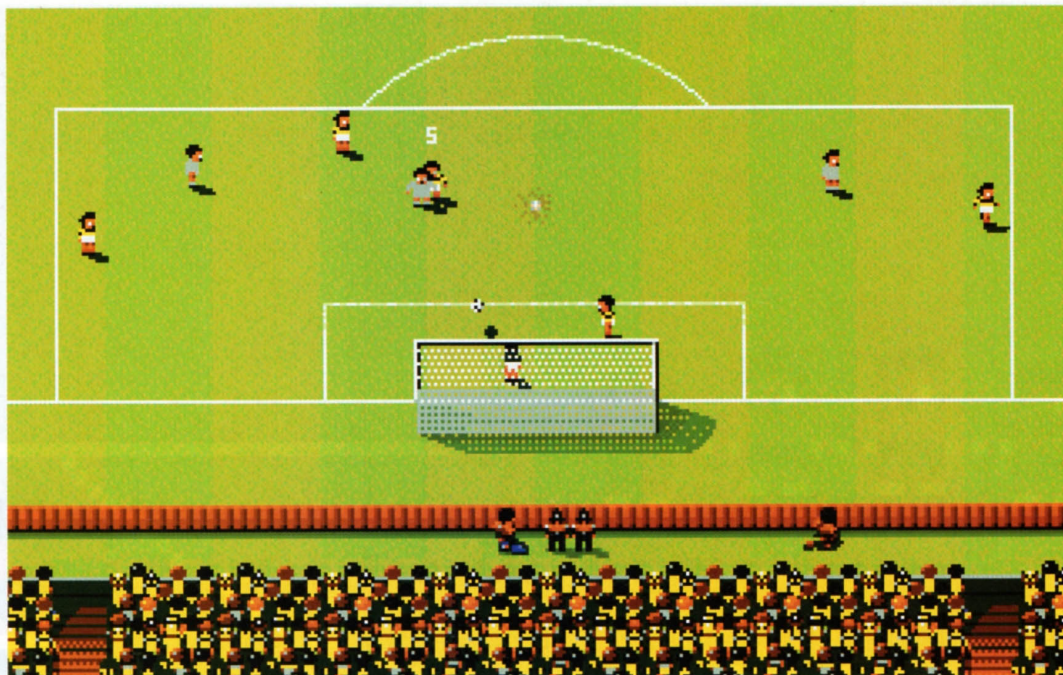


why that works. Creatively, obviously it's more fun. Secondly, we created an identity for ourselves – so people know you and when you go to deal with publishers it's better. And also, it's cheaper, it's us just fannying around. We filmed it in Saffron Walden. We were sponsoring the club at the time. I've not seen it for ages, but it was a lot of fun making it."

Not content with making the games and filming the videos, Sensible also recorded its own music. As Hare argues: "It's cheap, you've got control over it, if it's wrong you redo it, you don't get someone saying you need £80,000 for a Robbie Williams track, and Robbie needs this and Robbie needs that and stuff. Although he's probably a very nice bloke, it's much easier and much more fun for us just to do our own stuff. It also makes more sense financially – at the time we were making a profit of 75 per cent every year. You don't get that anymore."

WHO KILLED SENSIBLE?

Having forged its reputation through defiantly 2D action, the end for the *Sensible Soccer* series was sounded by the advent of 3D graphics. In an



Trust us, it's a lot more exciting than it looks.

attempt to move with the times, a pseudo-3D version was released – following several delays – in the form of *Sensible Soccer '98*. While still reasonably playable, it lacked the immediacy of classic *Sensi*, and in comparison to its 3D accelerated rivals, looked a shed. In fact, there was a

"Having forged its reputation through defiantly 2D graphics, the end for the *Sensible Soccer* series was sounded by the advent of 3D graphics"

day in the PC ZONE office when Jon Hare brought in a copy of the latest update at the same time as another bloke was demoing the newest incarnation of *Actua Soccer*.

The gulf in looks was evident, and the respective titles seemed to be from different gaming eras. There was never another *Sensible Soccer* game made.

Hare admits: "I think what knocked it on the head was our attempt at 3D. Programming-wise, we never had the right people on it. In terms of gameplay, we had the guy who did the original one, but the actual 3D environment was never done properly. The animation wasn't good enough and it really, really

restricted what you could do, and it made it look crap. Also we were caught because we didn't want to mess the gameplay around too much. It was fast, we didn't want to suddenly make a slower game for the sake of fancy animation, so we tried to work it around the gameplay to get a similar speed. Playability-wise, I don't think it's that bad a game. But it didn't look anything like its opposition."

HERE, HARE, HERE

It's the classic top-down 2D frantic action for which *Sensi* will always be remembered though, and Hare cites the game as his favourite of the 31 he has worked on. But when did he last actually play it?



The intro to the pseudo-3D attempt was probably better than the game.

THE FUTURE: WHAT'S NEXT FOR FOOTBALL GAMES?

IT'S UNLIKELY WE'LL EVER SEE ANOTHER TOPDOWN FOOTBALL GAME, SO IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE STUCK WITH FIFA FOR THE MEANTIME



What's next – at least for the PC – is probably regular updates of *FIFA* until the end of time. Hare says: "I think they're getting better. But I played one about two years ago, I think I was Arsenal versus Barcelona, and I was winning 5-0 – the first game I ever played – at half time, and they equalised and made it 5-5, and I thought there's got to be some rigging going on here."

In common with anyone who knows anything about football games, Hare is a big advocate of

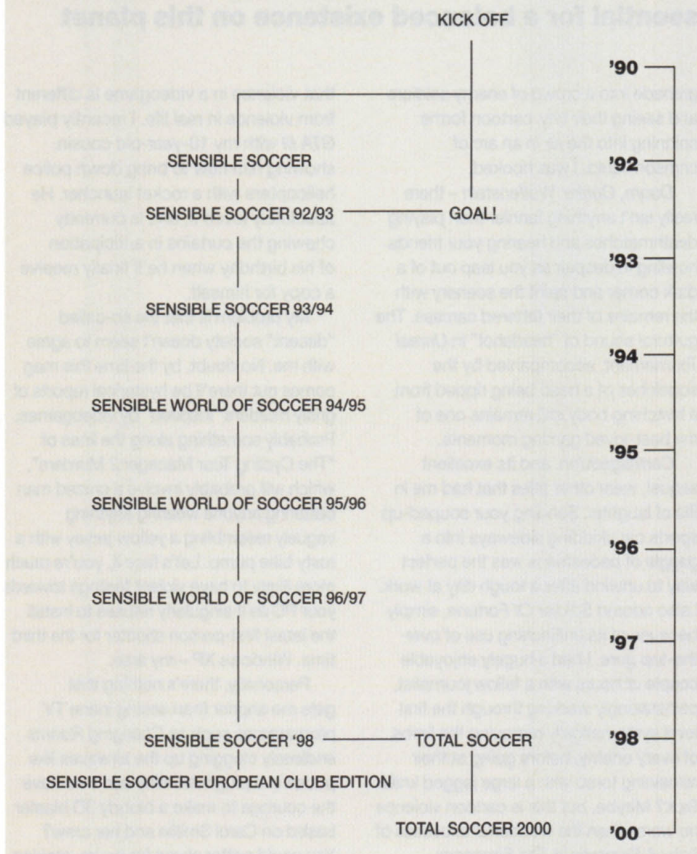
the PS2 game *Pro Evolution Soccer*: "It's a great game. It is a fantastic game. It's not as fast, I don't like the shooting, it hasn't got that feeling of really aiming that *Sensible Soccer* had. But it is a great game and it's the only football game I've played that's better than *Sensible Soccer* overall."

As for the future? "It depends on what people want. The key to it is controlling the animation, making the animation follow what you tell it to do rather

than having the animation dictate to you – having no restrictions. Ten years ago, when working on the Amiga, we had total control of everything, it's actually gone backwards today. Now we're still not up to where we were ten years ago in terms of speed of controllers interacting with graphics. The fact that people are still talking about *Sensible Soccer* proves that graphics are not everything. Gameplay is everything in a game."

THE SENSIBLE OPTION

TOP-DOWN 2D FOOTBALL GAMES HAVE NOW GIVEN WAY TO ULTRA-REALISTIC TELEVISUAL VIEWPOINTS, BUT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THEY WERE ALL THE RAGE



"I was out for a meal in Leamington Spa with some friends and I got talking to some people they knew about work. I said that I made games and mentioned *Sensible Soccer*, and they were like 'No! We've just been playing that on the SNES at home.' So afterwards

they invited us over to their flat and we had a few drinks and they challenged me to *Sensi Soccer*. The first couple of games they were really nervous and I was winning, and then they realised that I hadn't played for a while, and I was never that good at the SNES version

"I think we were the first game to put black players in"

JON HARE
DESIGNER OF SENSIBLE SOCCER



Not many of these are in the current England squad.



You wouldn't, would you?



What a comeback!



Still the most playable footy game ever?

anyway, and they started beating me more heavily as the evening wore on. I was just amazed they were still playing the SNES version after all this time."

In keeping with the title of the piece, Jon Hare believes that *Sensible Soccer* really has had a global effect. "I'll tell you how it's changed the world in my view," he explains. "We set out to make a game which I think by the end had about 80 or 90 countries in it, and was played all over the world. I think we were the first game to put black players in, players with dark hair and blonde hair, to make it as real as it was. And it really pleased me that people everywhere play *Sensible Soccer*. You read the sites and there's people from Yugoslavia, Brazil, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the States... We took time to make a game

for people from other countries when no one was doing it, and we're still getting people that are grateful for that ten years later. And that's what's amazing, because it was about football fans around the world, and that's actually how it has come across, which is great. They've got things like the Hungarian *Sensible Soccer* Championship and stuff, which is brilliant. For me it's brilliant, I love it."

There are occasional rumblings of a GameBoy Advance conversion, but Hare has no intentions of ever making another full-blown *Sensi*. As he says: "We just about got away with the 3D version, to do it again would be a huge mistake. I'd rather make less money out of it and have it as a gaming icon." [X]



COMMENT

Spilling blood in a videogame is wrong, say the moral majority. Not so, says an angry Jamie Sefton. Violent videogames are in fact essential for a balanced existence on this planet

AMATEUR psychiatrists are welcome at this point. You see I have a problem. I don't think that violent videogames are wrong in any way. They are, in fact, bloody hilarious.

I was trying to think back recently to the first time I saw digital blood spilled in a videogame, and I reckon for me it was Sensible's *Cannon Fodder* on the Amiga. I remember chuckling heartily as I threw a

grenade into a crowd of enemy soldiers and seeing their tiny, cartoon forms spinning into the air in an arc of crimson liquid. I was hooked.

Doom, *Quake*, *Wolfenstein* – there really isn't anything funnier than playing deathmatches and hearing your friends howling in despair as you leap out of a dark corner and paint the scenery with the remains of their tattered carcass. The guttural sound of "headshot" in *Unreal Tournament*, accompanied by the squelches of a head being ripped from a twitching body still remains one of my best-loved gaming moments.

Carmageddon, and its excellent sequel, were other titles that had me in fits of laughter. Sending your souped-up sports car skidding sideways into a gaggle of pedestrians was the perfect way to unwind after a tough day at work. I also adored *Soldier Of Fortune*, simply because of its unflinching use of over-the-top gore. I had a hugely enjoyable couple of hours with a fellow journalist, painstakingly working through the first level systematically removing the limbs of every enemy, before going at their remaining torso with a large jagged knife. Sick? Maybe, but this is cartoon violence no worse than the wonderful excesses of *Itchy & Scratchy* in *The Simpsons*.

"What about the children?" I can hear the Daily Meldrew-reading moral majority cry. *Grand Theft Auto III* has sold more than six million copies on PlayStation 2 alone. You can't tell me that everyone enjoying the carnage in that beautifully-crafted game is over 18? Is that wrong? No. Kids are wise enough to realise

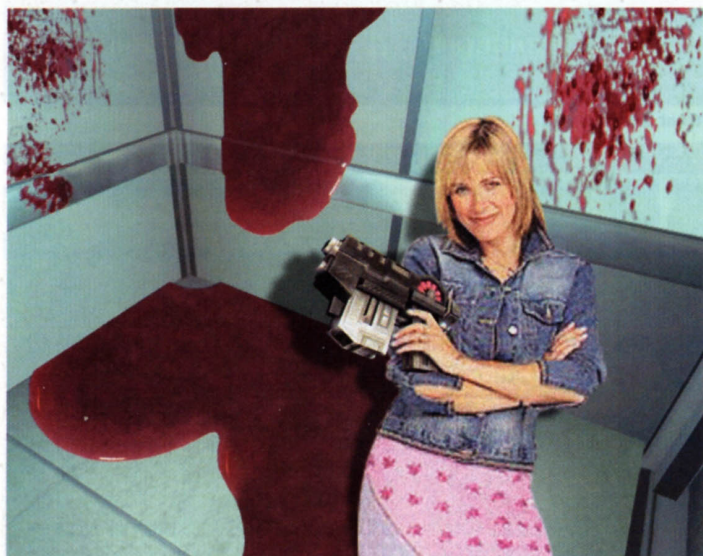
that violence in a videogame is different from violence in real life. I recently played *GTA III* with my 10-year-old cousin, showing him how to bring down police helicopters with a rocket launcher. He absolutely loved it, and is currently chewing the curtains in anticipation of his birthday when he'll finally receive a copy for himself.

My problem is that the so-called "decent" society doesn't seem to agree with me. No doubt, by the time this mag comes out there'll be hysterical reports of grisly murders "inspired" by videogames. Probably something along the lines of "The Cycling Tour Manager 2 Murders", which will probably involve a crazed man battering anyone wearing anything vaguely resembling a yellow jersey with a rusty bike pump. Let's face it, you're much more likely to have violent feelings towards your PC as it singularly refuses to install the latest first-person shooter for the third time. Windows XP – my arse.

Personally, there's nothing that gets me angrier than seeing inane TV programmes such as *Changing Rooms* endlessly clogging up the airwaves like pubes in a plughole. Why can't we have the courage to make a bloody 3D blaster based on Carol Smillie and her crew? You could potter about for hours, making new lampshades from old tights and discussing the merits of MDF, before storming in with a flamethrower and reducing Mr and Mrs Hartley from Stevenage and their home to a scorched piece of earth.

So what's the verdict on my mental state? I'll get me white coat... [X]

"I adored *Soldier Of Fortune*, simply because of its unflinching use of over-the-top gore"



I used the Law-giver here to add a splash of colour to this tight space.

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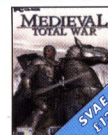
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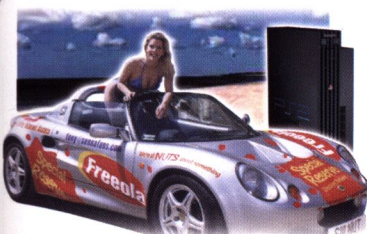
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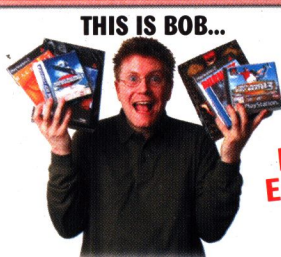


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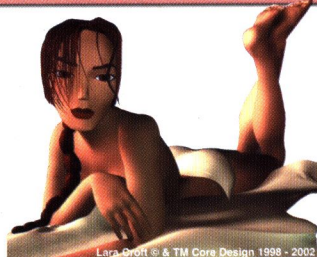


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